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Cher-ol





**PETER SANDERS,
RETIRED**



**PETER SANDERS,
RETIRED**

By
GORDON HALL GEROULD

L.C.

**NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EXILE	I
II. IDLENESS	21
III. PATRIOTISM	49
IV. JUSTIFICATION	78
V. DISTINCTIONS	97
VI. DISCOVERY	130
VII. DISCLOSURES	152
VIII. HIBERNATION	177
IX. EXPERIENCE	196
X. REINSTATEMENT	224
XI. OCCUPATION	247
XII. RESTITUTION	272
XIII. INTERVENTION	292
XIV. REHABILITATION	318

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**PETER SANDERS,
RETIRED**





PETER SANDERS, RETIRED

CHAPTER I

EXILE

IN WHICH MR. PETER SANDERS LEAVES HOME, EMBITTERED
TOWARDS FATE AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

SOMEWHAT more heavily than was his wont, Mr. Peter Sanders mounted the steps to his front door. For the first time since he had been living in the house, he noticed that the entrance was perhaps a little sinister, as it was certainly forbidding. He had always been rather proud of the front door, in point of fact. It was his own invention, and nicely calculated in its oiled and massive perfection to fend off intruders. It had barred out the curious and the hostile, but it had opened almost of itself to welcome safe gentlemen with plenty of money.

What gave the door a new aspect in the eyes of Mr. Sanders was the interview from which he was just returning. He had learned that the door must hereafter remain closed, not only to friends and to strangers with satisfactory introductions, but to its owner also. At least, Mr. Peckham, the eminent lawyer who had for a long time seen to it that Mr. Sanders did his business with the minimum of disturbance, had spoken quite firmly about the matter. He had intimated, with precision though with delicacy, that his client

... ..

must choose at once between exile of an indefinite sort, on the one hand, and of an all-too-definite kind, on the other. The business could no longer be protected, even if the fund for legal assistance should be doubled.

Nothing could be done, Mr. Peckham protested, with a district attorney who seemed to have no desire for money and who was lamentably obdurate to persuasion. Political aspirations of the loftiest reach might be attributed to the man, according to Mr. Peckham, but they were of a kind which no party machine could help him to achieve. Wherefore he was stubbornly determined to end the career of any one whose activity stood in his way. By persecuting Mr. Sanders he could curry favor with the electorate, whereas by leaving Mr. Sanders in peace he ran the risk of losing future votes. So Mr. Peckham had diagnosed the case, and had strongly advised his client's immediate retirement, not only from business but from town. Anything like a trial of strength with a man possessed of the tyrannical power and the temper of the district attorney would be at once undignified and disastrous. The time for that was past. There could be no doubt that the courts would uphold the administrative officers of the law, and send their victim into an enforced retirement infinitely more unpleasant than voluntary exile. Sing Sing was—but Sing Sing was, of course, out of the question.

As he contemplated his door, after ringing, the upshot of the interview was clearly present in Mr. Sanders's mind, though he made no conscious review of it. The door looked threatening, for the first time, because it had become a symbol of exile itself. It would open presently, but within the next days it would be as effectually closed to him as though he had not devised and paid for its elaborate mechanism. He was in revolt

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against an order of things that prevented a man from managing his own affairs as he chose. He could leave the State without interference, but he could do nothing that he really wished to do: neither continue in business nor live a hermit within the four walls of his house. Although he had not yet decided what he should do, or where he should go, he was perfectly aware that he would not be permitted any of the essentials of freedom.

When he had been admitted—and he was kept waiting on the threshold only long enough for the new impression made by his portal to get itself well engraved on his mind—Mr. Sanders gave his coat to a footman and went up-stairs at once to his library. The large front room on the third floor was called the library, though it contained no more books, as a matter of fact, than the room behind it. Around both there swept, in decent order, the lofty cases that held his dearest possessions. No one could say that Peter Sanders had been negligent or unsuccessful in business; but to book-collecting, his avocation, he had given his most passionate hours. Here they were, the memorials of his desire—the visible evidence of his discriminating taste. Angled for, not gathered by the drag-nets of dealers, they represented their owner's inner life, which he had cultivated in secrecy, yet without stealth, for thirty years. They had been chosen for their beauty, for their rarity, for their satisfying and curious comment upon life. The growth of his library had marked the successive reactions of Mr. Sanders to the world he knew. He had made of it, unconsciously enough, an autobiographical record. To any acute observer, who had had the privilege of inspecting the carefully kept books in which were entered the accounts of his numberless purchases, would have been revealed—if he had had,

that is, the necessary knowledge of literature—the heart of Peter Sanders.

The great front room—so invidiously known as the library—faced southward, and it caught, slanting-wise, enough of the afternoon sun to display its beauty. No room filled with well-bound books can be ugly, as Mr. Sanders would have agreed, but this one had the initial attractiveness of good proportions and stately Jacobean furnishings. There were no pictures; there were no hangings. The mosaic of leather and gilt upon the walls was left to relieve the sombreness of oak and pale plaster. Even the heavy rugs were subdued to the general harmony. A cheerful wood-fire served as a reminder that winter still ruled outside.

Mr. Sanders stood for a moment before the fire and gazed about the room. Much as he disliked confessing that he was beaten and must give up the business to which he had so long devoted himself, he hated even more the thought that he was to be banished from his house, and from the books that made his house a civilized dwelling. Although he had always made his clients welcome to the lower rooms and had, indeed, carried on his affairs from them, providing there everything needful for an establishment generously conducted, he had very seldom allowed business to intrude on this upper floor. The library had always been held sacred to his leisure. His handful of real friends had been received here, but not the gay moths who fluttered into the flames below stairs.

As he looked about him now, he had no definite thoughts, and he was not yet making any plans. He was still a little dazed by Mr. Peckham's pronouncement, though he was not inclined any longer to question its accuracy. He had to leave—that was all; he had to drop out from everything that made living worthy

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to be called life. He was destined to be an exile, for an indefinite period, from this house where he had arranged to pass the remainder of his days.

With a sigh, he dropped into a comfortable chair before the fire and covered his eyes with his locked hands. Overwhelmed though he was by the catastrophe that had overtaken him, a queer sort of pride, confirmed by the old habit of meeting emergencies swiftly, came to his rescue. Just because a sneaking hypocrite in office had caught him unawares, he mustn't let go the nerve that had carried him to pre-eminence in his business, and had held him there for two decades against all rivals and all attacks from without the camp. He must pull himself together, and at once.

What was the thing to do? Evidently the house must be closed. Quite as surely he mustn't hope to carry on his business there or elsewhere for the present. The district attorney could not last forever. One term would be the limit of his power of molestation, whether he went up or down on the wheel of politics; and his successor could be dealt with according to his kind. Very well, then. The game would be to keep the house ostentatiously closed after its owner's quite unostentatious departure from town. The house was well, if not favorably, known; it would stand in mute protest against the law's interference with liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Mr. Sanders had no wish to sell his home, and he could not very well manage about his books if he did dispose of it. He would go, but the house should stay. Let the district attorney get what satisfaction he could from its closed shutters. It would be a perpetual menace, a reminder that Peter Sanders was always watching his chance to come back.

As he lifted his head, a grim smile pulled down the corners of Mr. Sanders's mouth, and his eyes twinkled

ment man, Henry, who ran the house was useful in a hundred ways. It was of a wrench to part with him.

A few moments the butler entered. • His footstepss that he might have been a shadow, his perfect in its kind that a king might have a lecorum. Spare of figure and shaven and ly dressed, he might have been mistaken n if he had not looked so completely the b sir," he said, standing at a respectful distance was deference itself, yet without any ng servility. As always, he knew his it with splendid firmness.

Anders turned his head slowly, and paused it before he spoke. "Henry, I wish to be cleared at once of all business appointments—understand?"

—so. Yes, sir. It will be easy to do it to-morrow—would give me an address——"

The reputable storage warehouse will do, I think that to you. Be sure, of course, that everything is well packed. I don't wish to lose my property—understand. I can't tell when I may be using

his turn in the vicissitudes of his career. "I am leaving home for an indefinite period."

"Yes, sir." Henry's own face did not change in expression: in this particular the man was his master's peer. "When shall you go, Mr. Sanders? I will arrange about the household at once."

"I shall leave—to-morrow will be Tuesday—I shall leave to-morrow if I can get passage. I have decided to go abroad."

"Yes, sir. Shall I book your stateroom? Perhaps it would be as well to have that done at once, if you will pardon my suggesting it."

"It ought to be attended to, certainly," responded Peter Sanders dryly. "Be sure to get me the best room on the promenade-deck, Henry."

"That may be a bit difficult so late as this, but I'll do whatever is possible, sir." With no hint that he appreciated his employer's gentle irony, the butler turned as if to leave the room. Then he hesitated and turned back. "Begging your pardon, Mr. Sanders, am I to tell your man to make his preparations to sail with you, or do you attend to that?"

"Tell him to pack." Mr. Sanders's tone was curt. "If you happen to have the time, I should be grateful if you'd oversee the business, but I fancy you may be kept busy with the few things I've already asked you to do. I'm not taking Karl with me."

"Very good, sir."

"By the way, there's just one thing more. Please keep on enough servants so that you can open the house on a day's notice. Dismiss the rest, but treat them liberally. I'll leave all that to you. I'm putting funds at your disposal. You'll draw for them and for yourself—while I'm gone. That is, I very much hope that you'll remain in my employ and stay on here."

It was a sign of extreme agitation, which did not escape Mr. Sanders, that Henry began to finger his shaven chin. "I'm very sorry, sir," he began, "but——"

"Of course I shall quite understand if you prefer not to stay. It will be a dull life after what you have been accustomed to."

Still the man remained hesitant. "It isn't that I wish to leave your service. But, if I may make so bold, sir, you'll certainly need a man to look after you."

Peter Sanders raised his drooping eyelids. "My good Henry, you don't mean you'd like to come with me—that you'd be willing to turn valet?"

"I trust I could give satisfaction," the man answered a little stiffly.

"But why on earth should you wish to step down to that? You're the best butler in New York, if you only knew it." Since he was leaving Henry for an indefinite period, and with weighty responsibilities on his shoulders, Mr. Sanders felt he could safely give this encomium. Henry had been with him for eight years, after all.

The butler did not answer at once. Instead, he shuffled his feet uneasily—an unbelievable awkwardness in so correct a person. Then he turned red beneath the blue-black of his cheeks. "It would suit me very well to travel, sir," he said at last, gulping out the words. "And—and I could leave things here quite safely with the second man."

Mr. Sanders dropped his eyes, and considered. It would be very comfortable to have Henry along, but it was odd of him to wish it. What could he think he would get out of it? A taint of cynical suspicion had been left in Mr. Sanders's mind by his years of business experience. If he had learned one thing,

than another, however, it was a nice discrimination with regard to the times when all cards should be laid on the table.

"I'll take you along, Henry," he said, "if you'll tell me why you really wish to go."

The butler winced. Possibly Mr. Sanders was correct in his quick surmise that it offended Henry's sense of decorum to give a reason for any choice he might make; reasons are personal, while Henry was as impersonal as a machine. Yet he had been addressed, and etiquette demanded that he reply. Before Mr. Sanders had time to phrase the withdrawal of his demand, the answer came:

"It's only, sir, that I think you need a careful man to look after your things—especially if you are traveling, Mr. Sanders."

Peter Sanders, though he was touched by the man's devotion, did not drop his mask. "I dare say you are quite right about that. But are you prepared for an indefinite stay abroad? I may be gone for some time."

"I've no one, as you might say, depending on me, Mr. Sanders—not now—and I'd be glad to get away, as it happens."

"Very well. Turn things over to Charles and come, then."

"Thank you, sir."

With discreet and silent step the man vanished, and left his master to take up the thread of his bitter reflections. They overwhelmed him more completely, in their return, than they had done earlier. It was not simply that he was being compelled to give up a very profitable business, though that was a blow in itself. Peter Sanders had lived an active life and was unaccustomed to idleness. What cut him more deeply yet was his forced abandonment of the house and the

books that it contained. To the degree that he clung to the possession in peace of his own fireside, he was already approaching old age. Still more unpleasant, however, was the thought that he was worsted (even though the discomfiture might be only temporary, it was positive) by that enemy of liberty, the district attorney.

Fortunately there was much to do before the next day. Mr. Sanders roused himself after a little, and set about the odds and ends of business that must be looked to: the matters that could not be left to Henry. Dinner and half the evening were past before he had finished what he had to do in preparation for the journey, and could resume his bewildered meditations on the hypocrisy of the animal who called himself man. What right had a district attorney, elected by the very people who had patronized Mr. Sanders's business with few interruptions for thirty years, suddenly to turn on him and threaten disgraceful punishment? He had grown moderately rich with at least the connivance of other district attorneys, and had flourished because men with votes wished to do business of the kind he carried on. If it was wrong now, it had been wrong all through the years Mr. Peckham had been spending part of his liberal subsidy on the police. Puritanical folk had been crying out in a rather nasty fashion for a decade, saying most uncharitable things, and Mr. Peckham had betrayed no anxiety until now. Pah! The whole difficulty had come about through the ambition of this new district attorney, who wished to be governor more than he wished to be honest; he needed the votes of the people who made a virtue of shrouding their vices and pretending that they had buried them.

In the agitation of his spirit, Mr. Sanders paced the floor of his library. The plump, unlined, heavy-browed

face, which he had trained to betray neither exultation nor dismay, worked oddly. Business acquaintances—the swift generations of dapper youths, and the handful of older men who had remained faithful to him while both they and he passed through middle age—would have thought it incredible that Peter Sanders could be so moved. In the unhampered solitude of this last evening he gave way to feeling as he had not permitted himself to do for a great many years. Baffled anger, impotent because it must wait before it could wreak itself on any object, contended with cynical pride within his well-fed and carefully tailored frame. He was the battle-field, for a few minutes, of as violent a struggle as ever was waged in barbarian heart.

Then, suddenly, he grew conscious that gentlemen of nearly sixty years cannot afford, physically speaking, to let their passions rage unchecked, especially if they have enjoyed good food and wine and have taken little exercise. He was seized with an ominous faintness. So, he thought, the tether he was on would permit only a short run in that direction also. With a shrug of the shoulders, he sank into a chair and tried to purge his mind of disturbing emotions. His trained will helped him. In a little while he was able to raise his head without discomfort, and he realized that his heart had begun to beat again more soberly. He resolved not to forget hereafter his doctor's advice against over-excitement, particularly as it was confirmed by his personal observation. The only proper thing to do with a nerve-racking moment, he had known for a great while, was to treat it as of no importance. What happened to one was, after all, of no importance. The indifference bred of cynicism would be of excellent service to him in the idleness decreed by the district attorney and the apathy demanded by the doctor.

Restored to equilibrium, if not to good humor, Peter Sanders began to walk the floor again, but this time not to torment himself with his own thoughts. He threw on more lights until the two book-lined rooms were illumined with subdued radiance. He wished to visit some of his treasured volumes and select a few to carry with him into exile. That there was a trace of sentimentality in his attitude towards his books he was too clear-sighted not to recognize; but he was by no means ashamed of it. Any man who has reached the top rung of success in his vocation can afford to indulge himself as he pleases about his hobby. So, while he took down from their places the volumes he was sending up-stairs to be put with the kit he was preparing, he fingered lovingly other books which he had no thought of taking. It was a pleasure merely to touch the exquisitely tooled backs of some of them, read or unread, and to think of the beautiful pages or the stored wisdom within.

To select so very few as he must content himself with was difficult, yet Peter Sanders accomplished the task with precise hand. Montaigne must go with him, and *Don Quixote*. Some thin volumes of the Roman satirists—whom he had learned to read, well on in life, after he had found out by happy chance that they expressed with quiet perfection some of the comments on humanity that he had made for himself: he could not travel without them. Over Jane Austen he momentarily hesitated; but he could not take the set, and he would not choose. A first edition of Swift's *Modest Proposal* might go, and a copy of Fielding's *Miscellanies* of 1743 for the sake of *Jonathan Wild the Great*. The books that he selected were not for the most part gentle of temper, glowing with love for man and man's excellencies. They were, however, suited

to the sardonic humor of Mr. Sanders, routed from his citadel as he was and compelled to retreat with none of the honors of war.

He had accumulated some twenty-five volumes, and was about to give orders to have them packed, when a servant appeared with a card. Mr. Sanders frowned slightly. He was not in a mood to parry the questions of a reporter, and he had no expectation that one of his few faithful friends would happen to turn up this evening. As a matter of fact, he had intentionally abstained from giving any one a hint that he was running away. The performance was too ignoble to deserve a sympathetic audience, while it would be utterly intolerable if accomplished in the full glare of journalistic publicity. Better go by stealth and explain to friends afterwards, he had thought, than run the risk of notice by the press. For a moment, as he saw the footman approaching, he suspected the discreet loyalty of Mr. Peckham.

His fear was short-lived, however. The card bore the name of James Garmany, who was one of his oldest and stanchest friends. His coming was probably due to chance, but in no case could it be painful or have evil consequences. Garmany left much to be desired in the matter of superficial polish: he was a bit of flotsam from earlier and less prosperous years, when Mr. Sanders had sailed dangerously and had known strange companions. He could, nevertheless, be depended on. He had shared many secrets in his time, and he had never betrayed a friend. Peter Sanders liked the man.

"Ask Mr. Garmany to come up here," he said, "and then see that Henry gets these books." He indicated the volumes piled at one end of the great library-table.

Without much delay, Mr. Garmany entered the room. He was a florid person: the most striking thing

about him was his floridity. A retreating wave of gray hair curled along the top of his ruddy and globular head. In contrast to the recessive modesty of the hair was a luxuriant and elaborate moustache, which threw the emphasis of the face on an unusually powerful jaw. He was a large man, but he looked larger than he really was. Perhaps the amplitude of his chest had something to do with the effect he gave of superhuman size, for he had none of the unfortunate flabbiness of the giants who have left fairy-tales to parade solemnly in circuses. He was a powerful creature, and his blue eyes indicated a masterful will that would ordinarily be exercised with good humor. He was dressed, as became his position and his person, most fashionably.

"How are you, Peter, my boy?" he inquired, stretching out a huge paw—carefully manicured.

"I'm well, thanks," said Mr. Sanders. "Good of you to come round. How are politics?" He had no intention of appearing in any way disturbed, nor yet of informing his friend, unless casually, that he was a prospective exile.

Mr. Garmany shook his head and sat down. "Pretty bad, pretty bad," he answered. "Before long they'll be sayin' a man hasn't the right to do as he will with the votes in his own district. They'll come to that."

"Hard on you, that would be." Peter Sanders smiled grimly. "You may have to retire from politics, Jim, and go into an honest business."

No answering smile appeared on James Garmany's face. "That's no joke, either. If this reformin' gang don't leave the people alone, we'll be out of jobs, all of us. That's what I've come about, Sanders."

"Not to look for employment from me, I hope. It's late for that."

"Damned late." Mr. Garmany boomed out his

judgment ponderously. "I'm not tellin' you how I know it, Peter, but you've got a vacation comin' to you. And the sooner you take it, the better 'twill be."

"I know that. I'm leaving to-morrow, as it happens."

"That's not such a bad plan. Then I might have saved myself the trouble of comin' to you. You always did have a way of seein' a blow before it hit you in the face—as I might have remembered. No doubt that's why you've skinned other people instead of gettin' skinned." He chuckled volcanically.

"It was good of you to come, all the same, Jim, and I'm grateful to you." Mr. Sanders was urbane, but none the less genuinely moved by the loyalty of at least one old friend. "I hope it wasn't really troublesome for you to come," he went on. "You might have telephoned."

"I might," said Mr. Garmany, "but again I thought it safer to trust what I had to say to no wire. To be sure, I passed a battalion or so of plain-clothes men who seem to be encamped in the neighborhood, but perhaps they are guardin' the homes of the very rich who live hereabouts. I don't know the habits of the very rich, save that they divorce themselves as we don't in my district. They may have plain-clothes men to watch while they go to the club of an evenin', for aught I know, lest they find themselves widowers and the poodles orphans when they get back. In any case, it don't matter. My reputation is gettin' to be such that I can't hurt it even by comin' to your place, Peter, my boy."

Mr. Sanders winced slightly. Good fellow though he was, and faithful friend, Jim Garmany sometimes betrayed by speech and point of view his dark origin as "bouncer" in a Bowery dive. The qualities that

had made it possible for him to shoulder his way past saloon-keeping to political leadership in an important district were not delicacy and sensitiveness.

"Do you mean you're in a bad way, too?" asked Peter Sanders.

"I'm due for a knock-out in the next round," announced Garmany, pulling a long face that was still philosophically humorous. "Another election will be my finish—unless the reformers overdo it," he added cautiously. "But I'm bettin' on this district attorney. He knows the game as well as most of us, and he's got backers who'll put up for him grandly. The good days is goin', Pete, and they'll never be quite the same when they come back. There's more chance for you than for me, as I look at it, but devil a bit for any of us."

"Oh, I shall wait." Mr. Sanders set his jaw firmly and peered at his guest from beneath drooping lids. "I'm willing to wait."

"And you may be waitin' when the hearse comes—that's the worst of it."

Mr. Sanders smiled. He felt with dreadful sharpness the plausibility of the forecast, but he was not going to acknowledge it even to himself. "Things aren't quite so bad as all that," he said. "I'm going abroad, but I shall come back."

"You'll be sorry to be leavin' all this." Mr. Garmany waved a bejewelled hand at the walls. There was a new tone of generous concern in his voice, which explained some of his success with the voters of the East Side. "You're a queer one, Peter, and I don't understand it; but you'll be feelin' as I should if I had to get out of my district. The wonder of it is that your learnin' has done you no harm."

"Thanks. I'm afraid I've never got enough of it for that."

"Out of all the books you have?" James Garmany laughed. "Isn't your learnin' the amazement of the town? One of these college professors could have no more books than you have. I was tellin' a friend of mine of them only last week. He'd not believe a room in a private house ever held so many as I described to him, and he drank a quart of Mumm's before I had him convinced. You see, he knew you only by reputation in business, and he'd naturally not suppose such a keen one would care for readin'."

"It's a harmless weakness, surely." Mr. Sanders, though he knew only too well the superficial character of his learning, felt unable to explain his limitations. It would do Garmany no injury, after all, to suppose him wiser than he could ever really be, while the task of defining his love for books would be particularly difficult.

"Harmless?" queried Mr. Garmany. "No doubt. As long as a man can do what you've done, there'll be nobody to quarrel with the way he spends his odd hours. The only wonder is, as I say, that you never muddled your head with it all. You always were a queer one, Peter, never lookin' at a woman and never carin' to be out with the boys, but I'll grant that you learned young to find your way about. It may be that the books kept you fresh for your game—I can't say. And to think you're to be turned out of your house as if you was a poor man who couldn't pay his rent!"

"An exile, by gad!" Peter Sanders allowed himself the momentary relief of the exclamation, then put himself under rigid control.

"An exile!" Mr. Garmany shook his head. "So that's what you call yourself. It may come to that with any of us, these days; but it's better than wearin'

the stripes, which is how them reformers would dress us if they had the power." He rose and put out his hand.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Sanders heartily. "Whatever they may say of us, or do to us, there's a considerable satisfaction in knowing that you're in the world, Jim. It makes me almost sorry to be leaving America."

That was not his predominant feeling, however, as he stood on the deck of the liner, the following morning, with a partially unfolded newspaper in his hand. He had bought it just as he came aboard. On the front page, in staring letters, were the head-lines:

SMOKED OUT

SANDERS QUILTS THE GAME

VICTORY FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NOTORIOUS GAMBLER CLOSES ESTABLISHMENT

GOING TO — ?

Angrily he crumpled the offensive sheet and tossed it into the dirty water of the dingy, makeshift dock. He was leaving a land of pretences, after all, a land that obstinately closed its eyes to fact and tried to make fine words serve for righteousness. He knew the man who owned that yellow paper; he had entertained him at his house repeatedly. Not more than a month before, the hypocrite had lost a thousand or so there in a single evening's play. It had always been a matter of principle with Mr. Sanders not to inquire where the money went that Mr. Peckham managed, but he strongly suspected that some of it had gone, more or less directly, to the support of this very newspaper proprietor. The fellow was a worm—no less.

Peter Sanders was not wholly unaccustomed to public calumny. He had had unpleasant adventures in earlier years, and he had latterly become conscious—though

somewhat vaguely—that increase of prosperity had brought him into nation-wide disrepute. He had no means of knowing how many preachers, during the past few years, had taken his nefarious career to point the morals of sermons; he was a modest man, and would have been surprised to learn how widely he was held in admiring dishonor as the boldest and wickedest gambler in America. At the same time, there had been enforced upon him the knowledge that in certain circles, at least, he was infamous. Protected though he had been from most assaults of reporters, and disdainfully negligent of the meaningless scurry of current events as recorded in the press, he had been interviewed sufficiently often, and had glanced at enough special articles dealing with his private affairs, to realize in some measure his hateful notoriety.

But to have his reputation flung at him in this disgusting fashion at the moment of undignified retreat was peculiarly trying. A gobbet of mud hurled by a street urchin, though a meaningless insult and nowise lowering to a man's real dignity, cannot fail to exasperate him. Mr. Sanders despised the newspaper that he had idly bought, and despised its hypocritical owner, yet he felt bespattered by the vulgar missile.

In a mood of slow resentment at the country of his birth, ready to forswear allegiance to the tyrannical democracy that it had become, he turned from the rail and went to his stateroom. The wind that blew up the bay was chilly, and he had no wish, besides, to watch the departure of the ship that was to bear him into exile. It would be too grim an irony, even for a caustic observer of life's ironies, to see Liberty standing, stark and cold, at the gateway of the city from which he was barred by unjust prejudice and time-serving hypocrisy.

In his cabin he found Henry, turned valet, deftly arranging the outfit for the voyage.

"We shall be off in a few minutes," he said, curbing his anger lest a trace of it get into his voice and be misunderstood by the servant. "Don't you want to see the start?"

"I shall be out of your way in a moment, sir," Henry answered. "I'd much rather see the finish than the start, if I may say so."

With the words came a suppressed smile. Mr. Sanders had never seen him smile before, and wondered. He prided himself on understanding men, but he found Henry impenetrable. Until the evening before, it had never occurred to him that there was anything to fathom in this human automaton, but now the question of motives mildly piqued his curiosity. It was odd that Henry chose to leave a good berth in New York to follow an exile, especially as the exile had never done anything for him save pay good wages and give him a moderately free hand. Mr. Sanders puzzled over the question for a few moments after he was left alone. At all events, he concluded, Henry was safe, and he had proved himself very faithful. If he chose to have his little secrets, there could be no harm in it; he had every right to them. Outsiders had no business to pry into your private affairs and to interfere with them—which brought you back to the district attorney and the whole miserable business of this enforced voyage.

As the liner swung out into the river, Mr. Sanders was sitting in the one comfortable chair that the luxury of the stateroom permitted, acutely wretched and as angry as he dared to be. If they could have known the punishment they had succeeded in inflicting upon the notorious financial bandit, the representatives of the law would have been highly gratified.

CHAPTER II

IDLENESS

IN WHICH MR. PETER SANDERS LEARNS, TO HIS PROFIT, HOW IT
FEELS TO BE OUTSIDE RATHER THAN INSIDE

IN a history that pretends to record nothing but the major crises in the later life of Mr. Peter Sanders, together with a few of his more instructive encounters with persons of another tradition and another type, it would be idle to attempt continuity of narrative. Life not infrequently presents its unwrought dramas with no regard whatsoever for the Aristotelian unities: quite, indeed, as if Nature were ignorant of æsthetics.

What Mr. Sanders did and what he saw, during the months that immediately followed his hasty departure from America, would give little insight into his character. He had too often made European journeys to have left much freshness of appreciation for the sights of the beaten track, and he lacked any incentive to go far afield. He had never been so unoccupied before, of course, never so unlimited by time, but he had wandered freely and had gathered impressions that he could now merely refresh. During these first months he bought many books, less because he coveted them than because he needed distraction. Always present in the back of his mind was the fear that he might never see his new possessions properly displayed on his own shelves.

People, he did not care to meet. For the time being he was glad to be solitary. He had been cast out by society as a moral leper, and he had so complete a dis-

dain for the morals of the world at large that he was inclined to accept its verdict in an inverted sense: he felt himself much too good to associate with the average human hypocrite. As for the vagabond cosmopolite race that lived on its wits, though he admitted the theoretical correctness of its point of view, he disliked its taste in drinks and grammar and clothes. The few advances made by representatives of the profession he repulsed with a firm hand. To a tout who leeringly approached him in the Strand, offering to "put him on" to a good thing, he acknowledged his identity, but in the same breath managed to suggest most courteously that, though an exile, he was still a power not to be meddled with. The man slunk away abashed.

Similarly he put in her place a clever woman who called upon him, one morning, at his staid hotel in the rue Saint-Honoré. Instead of letting her unfold her scheme to fleece a couple of rich young Americans by his aid, he offered to give her the money to go to precisely the one quarter of the world where she could least afford to be discovered. His coolness on this occasion was assumed, but his distaste was unfeigned. Mr. Sanders knew very little about women, but he had the highest ideals for them. What would have seemed to him defensible rebellion against cant in a man shocked him in the opposite sex. He was at once disgusted and frightened by it. Indeed, the surprising fact that by no breath of scandal had his name ever been connected with a woman's, throughout his spectacular career, was in large measure due to his horror of feminine unconventionality.

Cut off from associates as he was by various antipathies of his own and of others, it was natural that Mr. Sanders should drift without a plan. It was inevitable, also, that he should get rather tired of himself. No

solitary, unless he has run to the desert for the sake of thinking, likes to go the round of his meditations uninterruptedly, for months on end. That is why the involuntary, or the aimless exile needs a frequent shift of scene: the external change makes the internal monotony more bearable.

Without knowing precisely why, towards the end of November—the first November after his hegira—Mr. Sanders found himself at Monte Carlo. He had been very chilly in Paris and had thought of seeking a quiet place on the Riviera where he might be able to settle down for a few months. Reading was one solace left him, and he couldn't read comfortably with cold feet. His hotel in Paris had a *calorifère*, to be sure, but it seemed to have been installed for purposes of display rather than of use. By the Mediterranean, he had hoped, he might unpack a box of books and digest them without having to waste time in physical exercise for the sake of keeping warm. When he had thought of the Riviera, Monte Carlo, reasonably enough, was the only name that suggested itself. To Monte Carlo, therefore, he had come in quest of studious quiet, vaguely conscious that he might have done better, but not at all certain where or how.

Like most places, Monte Carlo was a little disappointing at first. The main difficulty was with the weather, which happened to be less agreeable than he had anticipated. The sunlight glittered, but it did not warm. The blue of the sea, as it swept up to the promontory, looked summer-like, but the semi-tropical plants in the gardens shivered under the touch of winds that were foreign to their nature. By means of which Henry was the sole and sufficient master, coals that would really burn were found for the grate in Mr. Sanders's luxurious sitting-room; yet even Henry, the

most competent of servants, could not make the fire heat the vast apartment sufficiently.

On this account Mr. Sanders was often driven out, for mere warmth, to solitary strolls along the protected terraces that overlook the sea. He would greatly have preferred to stay at home, partly because of a curious physical inertia that had been settling upon him through the summer and autumn months, and partly because he was anxious to look through a set of books that he had picked up in London. They were published by some English antiquarian society or other, and appeared to offer, along with a good deal of unconquerable dulness, certain quite captivating records of what men had thought and done a few centuries back. The volumes were, besides, very pleasant to the hand, and they had a good page.

One afternoon, a week or so after his arrival, Mr. Sanders was sauntering gently up and down a stretch of gravelled walk that gave one, as he had discovered, the securest shelter from wind and the most unfailing warmth of all the paths within easy distance of his hotel. That it was also not far from the Casino made it neither more nor less attractive to him, since he was ignoring, as far as possible, the existence of that establishment. He had never entered it, in point of fact, and did not intend to. He had come to Monte Carlo for quite other purposes than to observe amateur votaries of folly at their sacrifices—he had come for warmth and quiet.

What annoyed him more than customarily, this afternoon, was his complete failure to find what he had expected the Riviera to give him. Besides, he had had, that very morning, a rather discouraging report from Mr. Peckham about the state of politics in New York. The district attorney, it appeared, was still making

his profit out of the disappearance of the notorious Sanders from public life, and the newspapers and the cheaper magazines were yelping in a rabid pack along a trail of misdoings that were largely invented in retrospect. Mr. Peckham had sent over a bundle of clippings to confirm the accuracy of his report. These distant slanders, and even the postponement of his revenge, might have disturbed Mr. Sanders less if it had not been for his immediate troubles. He was pondering, as he walked, whether he shouldn't pack up at once and go to Egypt. There, at least, he could get warm.

In his distress and perplexity he beat an angry tattoo on the gravel with his stick, and once or twice he stopped to trace a rough map of the Mediterranean upon it, so completely absorbed by his meditations that he paid no attention to the amused glances of casual passers-by. He was trying to make out what spot within convenient distance would be most likely to have escaped the prevailing inclemency of the season.

He had nearly made up his mind to try Cairo, indeed, when he noticed that he was being closely watched by a young man in black who had followed his movements for fifteen minutes. No one likes to be stalked, least of all any one who has himself been a man-hunter in his time, and more especially if the stalking is an awkward performance. Mr. Sanders's ill humor was measurably increased by his consciousness that, in his self-absorption, he had allowed himself to be spied upon by a gaunt-faced youth who was making not the least effort in the world to conceal his impolite curiosity.

"I must be going off," muttered Peter Sanders to himself. With great dignity he frowned at the intruder.

The effect of this was not what one would have anticipated. Instead of appearing abashed, the young man came forward, smiling, with his hat in his hand, and made a sweeping bow.

"Kind sir," he began in English as oddly pronounced as it was strange in diction. "It is five, will it not be, or six perhaps? I beg you. Thank you."

"Eh? What? What can I do for you?" asked Mr. Sanders, taken off guard by the suddenness of the youth's attack. A grotesque creature he was, when first you looked at him, but evidently quite harmless. His eyes glittered, and his clothes sagged unaccountably at all the points where clothes should fit the figure; but otherwise he needed only to rid himself of superfluous black hair on head and face to become a presentably ugly young man. The way he smiled through his youthful beard was the most disconcerting thing about him, after all.

"Oh, yes. I say it is five—or six? All right. You come with me, kind sir." Thus the stranger, apparently believing that he made matters clearer by his explanation.

"Hanged if I'll come with you," answered Mr. Sanders, who was not at all mollified by the ready smile and the exaggerated bow that accompanied the request.

"Do, please. It is a privilege."

Mr. Sanders narrowed his eyes intently: a trick known of all men who ever saw him when he was puzzled or harassed. For a moment he studied the youth with the concentration of effort that had been one of his most valuable qualities in business. Little escaped his notice when he put his full powers of mind into reading a face, and a precise estimate of the individual was always made without delay. One swift look was

enough now. His features relaxed and broke into a humorous smile.

"I feel somewhat doubtful about its being a privilege," he said urbanely, "but I shall be happy to be of service to you. You've been losing heavily, I judge."

The young man's face grew stormy for an instant, then composed itself again into ecstatic calm. "I have lost much," he admitted gravely, "but now I need not care. It has changed for me—the chance. I shall not have to telegraph to my parents, by which their hearts would be broken. They have not much, the parents. My father counted that we should be rich again when once I had played the thirty thousand francs. Yet now I have but three hundred! And but for you, kind sir— Come, please. Will you not save me?"

"Your father? I beg your pardon, but I don't yet understand." Mr. Sanders had determined quite definitely that the youth was to be trusted and that he was in real need of help, but he failed to make out the circumstances, no less than the kind of assistance required.

"My father? Oh, yes, my father—of course. Has he not for years been studying the system till it seemed perfect? Even yet I do not know why it failed. It was of a beauty! Yet I played it as it was to be played, and I have lost."

The situation was getting awkward. Mr. Sanders felt that it would be impossible to stand stock-still on the terrace any longer, discussing the private affairs of a total stranger in so public a manner. The young man gesticulated wildly in spite of his confident attitude towards fate, and he couldn't fail to attract attention. Nevertheless, there was much to interest one in the disjointed story. For the first time in his life,

Peter Sanders was inclined to feel a measure of sympathy for a gambler who had been defeated in trying to beat an establishment at its own game. He was curious, moreover, to know how he himself came in, and what he was expected to do.

"Systems always fail, you know," he said, mentally reviewing the hundred and one attempts that had been made against his own house. "But won't you come up to my hotel and tell me about it?"

"Alas! I should be overjoyed." The young man bowed again. "But, sir, there is no time to lose. We must take the chance as it is. I beg you, come with me. I will share it all."

"You mean to the Casino?"

"Yes, that. I pray." The youth folded his hands in a droll attitude of supplication.

"But I've never been there—I haven't a card, which is necessary, I believe."

"Ah, but that is not hard to do. One has but to cross the street and ask."

Mr. Sanders grew more and more puzzled. He saw that a visit to the Casino—which he had never expected to enter—was becoming inevitable. He didn't wish to go; any gambling-house not his own seemed to him supremely uninteresting. Yet he would have to grant the youth's demand if only to get rid of him. It was impossible to continue the conversation any longer where they were, and it would be brutal to dismiss the young man curtly when he was in such desperate straits. Besides, the case was interesting. Sons weren't ordinarily sent to Monte Carlo by their fathers in order to recoup the family fortunes, nor did sons usually ask elderly strangers to help them by acting as chaperons and mascots. Peter Sanders chuckled to himself. That must be what was expected of him! He was expected

to bring luck, to help break the bank—presumably as an innocent greenhorn. Possibly, however, his experience might be of some service to the youth, if only to prevent him from meeting fresh disaster. What between curiosity and friendliness, there was reason enough for going to the Casino, at least.

"All right," he said. "I don't mind coming with you, but I'd like to know why you think I'll be useful."

The young man grasped his benefactor's capable plump hand and wrung it effusively. At the same time he turned with a dancing step of joy towards the Casino. "Useful, is it?" he cried. "You are not less than my salvation. Did I not know it? Did I not dream last night of one like you—one who should tap with his stick on the earth?"

"Dream of me? Well, I've known stranger ways of hitting on a lucky number. It's as good as any martingale, at all events, and better than any system. But what's the number? What do you mean by tapping?"

"By the tapping?" The youth took Mr. Sanders's arm, as if fearful lest he escape him, and led the way up the slope. "Did you not know? So better, if you did not. All the day have I looked for you, and behold! you were in the garden as I had dreamed. With your stick you tapped the earth, also as I had dreamed. It was five times—yes? But you do not remember. It is no matter. We can try the both."

"But if you have the number, why do you need me? What can I do?" Mr. Sanders, though he had habitually defended at once himself and the business of gambling by the cynical reflection that the affairs of the world were conducted on cut-throat principles, could not help feeling a little shamefaced as they approached the Casino. It was too much like the lamb

guiding the wolf into temptation. He would have preferred to get his release from the young man and go home to his hotel.

"Why I need you? Do not forsake me, kind sir," pleaded the youth. "You must stand behind, else the charm may be broken."

"I see." Peter Sanders smiled. The jest was going to be quite as grim as he had fancied. He was to be not only oracle but guardian angel of the innocent, it appeared. The people in America who pictured him with horns and cloven hoofs would doubtless find him unrecognizable in this new rôle. Yet he couldn't in decency avoid playing the part through, now that he had been cast for it. "What is our game, by the way?" he asked. "Not *rouge et noir*, I suppose."

The young man looked round at him swiftly. "Ah, no!" he exclaimed. "Roulette, always. I have but three hundred francs, as I told you, so I must win quickly. Yes, certainly."

Mr. Sanders shrugged his shoulders. "You stand to have your capital hold out a little longer perhaps, that's all. Hadn't you better go home and tell your father that your system's no good?"

"Alas! it is impossible!" The youth loosened his grasp from his reluctant companion's arm and threw up both hands wildly. "Have I not said? It would kill them both—my parents. For them it is the end if I come back without money. But that cannot be. You have saved me!" Again he gripped the plump arm of his prospective savior.

"Well, then! We shall have to put it through, it appears." Mr. Sanders drew down the corners of his lips with grim determination. "Where do you hail from, by the way?"

"Hail? Hail from?"

"Where is your home, I mean? Where does this sporting father of yours live?"

"Ah, but I see! You mistake, kind sir. I have been in England, yes, and I know sport; but my father is not that. He is what these French call a *savant* and does mathematics. He is in Cracow, which is my home. I am a Pole."

Mr. Sanders hesitated no longer. He knew nothing about Poles save that they came in large numbers to the land from which he was exiled, and worked in gangs. But this Pole was very different from the bullet-headed creatures he had casually inspected at home; and for anything he knew, it might be the custom of the country in Poland for fathers to employ their sons in hazardous raids on Monte Carlo. Obviously his acquaintance was well bred according to some queer standard or other, and, quite plainly, his story was truthful. Pilate-wise, Peter Sanders washed his hands of any responsibility for the adventure. He only hoped that he should not encounter American acquaintances in the Casino. He had no wish to have it bruited about that he had fallen so low as to be initiating uncouth foreigners into the mysteries of roulette. The worst interpretations would be given the circumstance.

Without any difficulty, being properly clad and having a visiting-card in his pocketbook, he got his admission and crossed the road to the Casino, still watchfully guided by the strange youth. Although he had not previously cared to enter the building, and might have remained in Monaco for three months without doing so, as far as he himself was concerned, he found himself not wholly incurious, once there.

As they passed through a lofty room towards the gaming-tables, he looked about him with interest and made mental note of its effect. A little scornfully he

compared it with the rooms in his own New York house. This was more pretentious: there was all the difference between them that would be expected of a private establishment as contrasted with a public institution. He was quite sure, however, that he had shown better taste in fitting up his rooms than had the magnates of colossal Monte Carlo. Here, there was too much gilding, too riotous a display of baroque ornament. It was like the showy regions of a hotel on which a millionaire has allowed a fashionable architect to do his utmost. Mr. Sanders did not approve, though he recognized that this was better suited to the throng of timid travelers who staked a casual louis, and the miscellaneous public of gamblers who risked their all, than would have been the subdued luxury of his own house.

The tables were not crowded; the winter season had not begun, and at this hour of the afternoon only the more determined players, those bent on proving their various systems and martingales superior to the experience of the past, were grouped about the wheels. One glance was sufficient to show Mr. Sanders the general character of the assembly. He knew the type, though its variations were endless. It amused him, indeed, to notice how slightly racial peculiarities served to conceal the dominant traits that he understood so well. Gamblers, it appeared, were a tribe apart. Some memory from boyhood brought the term Ishmaelites to his mind. That was it: they were a people rejected, branded with an unmistakable sign. The reflection was unpleasant, for one didn't care to be lumped with these eager-eyed men and women, even though they were quite gay and quite conventional. Some innate squeamishness, which had survived in Peter Sanders through all the years of his nefarious activity, made him dislike the thought that this was his proper world.

With a little shiver he recognized that the detachment he had always practised could scarcely have kept him from taking on certain characteristics of the professional gambler. He had never regarded himself in that light before, but merely as a man of intelligence who chanced to be making his living from a pack of fools, well mixed with rascals. It was the sight of the recognizable type in this cosmopolitan form that set him thinking.

So sharp was the flash of ironic illumination—the second he had experienced within a quarter-hour—that he was very glad when his youthful conductor chose a table unhesitatingly and gently pushed him into a seat. With the oblong of green cloth directly before him, there was less to cause disquieting meditations. As a matter of fact, it was a very long time since he had been placed as he was at present—a player merely, with no responsibilities for the conduct of the game. Indeed, in a technical sense, he had no responsibilities whatever now, for the young Pole stood behind his chair to direct his movements.

"I judge that you wish me to place your money for you," he said to the youth, turning round in his chair as soon as he was seated. "Is that part of the charm?"

"Yes—yes. Please! That also is necessary." He thrust a twenty-franc piece into Mr. Sanders's hand.

Mr. Sanders smiled. "If you don't mind taking the advice of an old-timer," he said, "I'd suggest your trying out your luck at the bottom limit."

"No—no!" The young man would accept no suggestions, if indeed he understood, which Mr. Sanders very much doubted. "We play first the five, as I think it right. Then twenty francs on six—in case!"

"Very well." Mr. Sanders felt himself to be completely in the power of his Pole, an automaton merely,

set there to execute the wrath of the god of chance.

"Do you mean *en plein*?"

"Oh, yes." This the youth understood, at all events.

"*En plein*, for I must win quickly."

"*Messieurs, faites vos jeux!*" The voice of the *croupier* broke in on the consultation.

Mechanically Mr. Sanders placed the stake. To his amazement, as the wheel spun, he suddenly felt his nerves grow taut. It was like the return of youth. He had supposed himself immune, long since, to the trivial caprices of chance, and he had often watched luck turn against him to the extent of five figures with less excitement than caught him now. On no account would he have looked round, but he experienced vicariously, by some mysterious channel of communication, the young man's tense moment.

"I can't stand much of this," he muttered to himself.

But to the stretch of the instant's excitement was added a new sensation when he saw a heap of gold pushed towards him. They had won, then!

Gathering the gold in both hands, he rose from the table and poured it all into the youth's outstretched palms.

"That's all I can do for you," he said thickly. "I'm sorry, but my heart isn't much good, I find."

The black eyes glittered for a moment with something like anger. Then anger changed to profound melancholy. "Once more—only once more!" The plea was the cry of a child.

Peter Sanders looked at him, then hesitated. To hesitate was to yield, for what showed in the haggard face pressed close to his was something more than dejection. Hang it! The whole story was peculiar, but it was certainly genuine. There was terror in those eyes,

and not at all selfish terror. The boy was afraid of what would happen if he were left alone—that the charm wouldn't hold—but still more of what would happen afterwards to the people he loved.

"I'll place your stakes for a couple of turns more," said Mr. Sanders with an effort at deliberate coolness. If he was to go on with this, he must steel himself into indifference. "That's the best I can do for you."

"I knew it was so!" the young man exclaimed under his breath. "You cannot leave me yet."

Mr. Sanders shrugged his shoulders. "May I try a *transversale* this time?" he asked. "It may take less out of me."

"*Messieurs, faites vos jeux !*" came the cry.

"Yes, yes," whispered the Pole, hastily drawing out the chair. "Quickly! What you will, kind sir."

Again came the moment of horrible suspense that no assumption of detachment could make less than excruciating. This time four won, and Mr. Sanders grew steady with the relief of it as he gathered in the winnings—a smaller pile than before but, nevertheless, a notable addition to the resources of a man who had been on the edge of desperation.

"I've brought you luck, without much doubt." He smiled over his shoulder, pinching the dozen gold pieces between thumb and forefinger as he passed them back to his partner. "Another turn, and I can safely leave you to play your own game."

"If I must—! But now we shall play the five *en plein* again, and for what will be worth it, yes." He would not take the coins that Mr. Sanders held, but instead counted out others till he had made up a full thousand francs. "There! These, then."

Until this moment, the oddly sorted pair had attracted no special attention from the others at the table. That

a well-conditioned, well-groomed gentleman should be playing for small stakes in consultation with a gaunt and seedy youth was perhaps a little odd, but not more so than a hundred things one saw at the Casino each day. The two had spoken discreetly, in low tones, when they discussed their affairs, and even the hurried rising of the older gentleman after his first stroke of luck had brought but momentary glances from the preoccupied gamblers.

When, however, Mr. Sanders placed a thousand francs on the number that had been favorable to him at first, curiosity was aroused. Play was slack, and anything that promised excitement was welcome. A few drifting spectators, scenting a plunger, paused to watch the turn, while the occupants of the table scrutinized the pair with frank interest. Only the bland *croupier* seemed unconcerned.

To Mr. Sanders, acutely self-conscious, and more troubled than ever now that the young man had elected to commit the unspeakable folly of losing all he had won, and more, on a single shot, the curiosity of the bystanders was painful. He was excited, though less so than before. Somehow the size of the stake was more nearly in scale with his own operations, and hid the vision of that foolish old man and woman in Cracow who were awaiting the return of their son. Supreme disgust fell upon Peter Sanders as the wheel spun. Why couldn't the boy play sanely? In vein, as he seemed to be, he might have hoped at least to recoup his losses. Beyond that, of course, nothing could be expected; gambling-houses, public or private, were not run for the benefit of the needy. That they existed at all was the worst indictment possible of human intelligence.

The wheel stopped. It was one of the great moments

in the life of Peter Sanders when he heard the imperturbable *croupier* cry, "*Cinq*," a little sharply, as if to emphasize the unusual generosity of the management. The gold that was piled before him made the case clear. Chance and he together had saved the ruined Pole. He was very glad, though he tried to appear unconcerned.

As he rose, the young man grasped his hands fervently, too full of gratitude for speech. Mr. Sanders was seized with the sudden fear that the customs of Poland might lead him to embrace his talisman and benefactor. To forestall the possibility, he released one hand and began to pour the gold pieces into a gaping pocket.

"Congratulations!" he said quietly. "I'm glad that you're out of the woods. I didn't think we could pull it off."

"Oh, kind sir!" The young man's emotion choked him for a moment, then burst out into a torrent of strange speech, Slavic presumably, and no doubt intended for thanks.

Mr. Sanders tried to draw him away from the table. "We'd better talk this over in private," he suggested. "Don't you think so? What about my hotel?"

"No! No! I must stay. I must end it. Perhaps the luck, it will hold, even if you go."

"Better leave it where it is. A *coup* like that doesn't come often, let me assure you. Take an old stager's advice."

The youth shook his head firmly. "No. I cannot. But where? Tell me. I come later to give you the half."

Peter Sanders knitted his brows. It was to be the old story, then. The boy would be penniless again before the Casino closed. However, he'd better give

him the chance to come. There would be need of consolation after everything was over, and possibly the chance to save a guileless innocent from the consequences of despair. The railway-ticket furnished by the management wouldn't serve, he fancied, as a sufficient balm in this peculiar case. He took out a card and scribbled upon it the name of his hotel.

"You'll find me there at any hour," he said. "Don't fail to come. If you go broke before evening, you'd better turn up to dine with me."

The Pole looked at him, uncomprehending. "Perhaps," he replied evasively. "If I can, I come to dine, but I may not have finished then. I make what I can this day. Yet later I shall come—at least that. You save me—yes." With a brilliant smile, he took Mr. Sanders's hands once more and pressed them eagerly.

Rather sick at the thought of the havoc that was preparing, Mr. Sanders turned away. He wasn't of this world, certainly, despite the reputation he had acquired, and he preferred to remain an outcast rather than acknowledge allegiance to a social order that let outrages like this go on. At home he had been all on the side of the outlaws, the men who dared defy society by permitting the wealthy to lose money at games if they chose; but here, where gambling was enthroned, he found himself disgusted with the temptations that were flaunted before weak-minded mathematicians and loyal sons. Things were very wrong, however you viewed them.

Matters weren't mended, indeed, by an encounter that befell him a half-dozen steps from the table: precisely the kind of meeting he had faced before he entered the Casino. A man who had sometimes visited his house in New York touched him familiarly on the shoulder. The man was named Dawkins, was rich,

and was classed by Mr. Sanders among vulgar imbeciles. That he had been dropped from at least one club was common knowledge. His touch was only less unpleasant than the smirk by which he accompanied it.

"How are you, Sanders?" he inquired heartily. "See you keep at your old tricks! Can't down you, can they?"

Mr. Sanders's jaw set, and his eye grew very cold. "How do you do, Mr. Dawkins? I regret that I am not at present keeping open house for fools. When I am, may I hope to entertain you again?"

"That's a good one!" Dawkins, a little dashed, tried to laugh. "No reason to get hot, it seems to me. I only meant to say that you've picked up a queer-looking bird this time, but I suppose the plucking is good—eh?"

"You are very kind to ask." Peter Sanders grew even more coldly ironic. "My young friend, whom you seem to have been watching, is indeed in excellent vein. I trust he will win enough to make it unnecessary for him to return to the very mixed company of Monte Carlo. Good-afternoon, Mr. Dawkins."

As he moved off, leaving the creature to digest his rebuff, he heard him say to his companion: "Rides a rather high horse for a fellow who's been threatened with the 'pen,' doesn't he?"

It was true, Peter Sanders reflected, tapping the floor impatiently with his stick. He had no right to be censorious or, for that matter, to resent the intrusions of men like Dawkins. He could, however, keep aloof from them by remaining in solitude, which was what he must hereafter resign himself to. Quixotic sallies into the haunts of gayety he must henceforth avoid.

In his sitting-room at the hotel he found Henry mending the feeble fire.

"We shall be leaving for Cairo to-morrow," he said.

"For Cairo? Very good, Mr. Sanders."

He had come to depend upon Henry as *courier*, as well as valet, during the past months, and he had never found his resourcefulness at fault. It made travelling exceedingly simple, he found. Besides, he had begun to feel an attachment to the silent figure who waited on him with such tact. Though he knew him no better than he had in New York, he was conscious of a tacit understanding between them that was grateful.

"I hope you don't mind leaving Monte Carlo?" he went on.

"Oh, not at all, sir. I hope we may find a better climate in Egypt. The cold is unseasonable here, I judge."

"It's unpleasant, in any case. We'll find things better in Cairo, I'm sure. By the way, a young man may turn up to dine with me to-night—or later in the evening—a young man in odd clothes. Please see to it that he is shown up to me without any fuss, will you?"

"Yes, Mr. Sanders." Henry looked respectfully inquisitive.

"It may amuse you to know that I've been playing mascot for him at the Casino—at his request. We've made a very decent haul, but he'll probably be bankrupt by the time he gets here. I doubt, as a matter of fact, whether he comes."

"And his name, sir?"

"Bless me! Now that you mention it, I don't know his name. It never occurred to me to ask. However, he lives in Cracow and has a learned father." Mr. Sanders smiled at his own expense. "I think I'll take

a nap before dinner. Gambling is exhausting work when your hand is out. Damn it, Henry! This was a bad case: a mere boy trying to save his father by throwing the dregs of the family fortune into the fire. Gambling's poor business for the outsider. I advise you to keep clear of it."

An enigmatic look of agitation—whether of painful memory or anxiety, it was hard to tell—passed swiftly across Henry's face. Had the fellow been gambling on the sly, Mr. Sanders wondered. His fears were not wholly laid to rest by the man's reply.

"Oh, yes, sir. I'd not think of it, I assure you."

"You must admit that I'm competent to give the advice, even if not a worthy preacher. Most men haven't my luck." Mr. Sanders laughed grimly. "I've learned one or two things this afternoon, Henry. The point of view makes a great difference in what one sees. I'd be ridiculously glad, for example, if that boy could go back to Poland with money in his pocket instead of stone-broke."

"Yes, sir. Shall I cover you with a rug before I go down, Mr. Sanders? The room is none too warm."

Peter Sanders chuckled as he lay with closed eyes, composing himself for his nap. "You might as well try to get blood out of a stone as to squeeze human sympathy out of Henry," was his comment to himself. "Why he devotes himself as he does to an old fool like me, I can't make out."

On waking, an hour later, he dressed for dinner with the help of his man; but nothing more was said between them of the afternoon's adventure. Mr. Sanders had not expected the Pole to come to him, but he was none the less a little disappointed, as he dined in customary solitude, at not seeing the young fellow again. It would have satisfied a mordant curiosity to know

just how the money won by their joint *coup* had melted and dwindled.

Later, wrapped in a heavy coat, he sat down to read by his fire. He had found a curious poem in one of the volumes he was going through: something about the battle of Lewes in the reign of Henry III. The Latin of it was doubtless bad—Mr. Sanders was no classicist, though fond of mulling over old books—but some of the couplets had real force and present application:

“Cur melioratio non admitteretur,
Cui vitiatio nulla commiscetur?”

There, for example, was a question that might be asked as justly to-day as in the thirteenth century. He was very far from sure, indeed, that corruption wasn't a necessary incident to reform. Take his own case: was his concern for the young Pole really a sign of grace in him, or was it merely a sentimental freak of idleness? One man was very like another, and a melting mood not necessarily better than a hard one. Here he was, an execrated gambler, exiled from his own country, yet chafing because he couldn't free an utter stranger from toils such as he had spent his life in setting for other men. It was a mad world!

On these reflections, at something like half-past nine, broke the silent figure of Henry. He stood for a moment regarding Mr. Sanders before he spoke.

“I don't like to interrupt you, sir, but the—eh—gentleman has called for you. Shall I tell him that you are engaged?”

Peter Sanders looked up. “Not at all,” he said more sharply than was usual with him. “Do as you were told. Show him up at once.”

“Very good, sir.” Though respectful, there was a

shade of deprecating forbearance in the man's voice that showed how little he approved such visitors. Indeed, when he ushered the Pole into the room, a few moments later, he bore himself with unnecessary dignity. The presumptions of eccentricity Henry did not allow.

Mr. Sanders was, himself, a little overwhelmed by the warmth of the young man's greeting, proceeding as it did from a person so dishevelled and so nearly disreputable. His long black hair was tumbled; his thin beard was matted on his face as if it had been clutched and clawed; his clothing hung about him in odder creases than ever. The gleam of his eyes, however, was certainly of exultation rather than of despair.

"It has been done!" he exclaimed rapturously. "You alone, Mr. Sanders"—he stumbled helplessly over the name—"kind sir, have made all things right. In the name of my parents, I thank you."

Under the disapproving eyes of Henry, who had not yet withdrawn, he dashed wildly forward and threw his arms around the shoulders of his benefactor. Too startled to disengage himself quickly, Mr. Sanders felt a respectful kiss imprinted on his forehead. He grew hot with embarrassment. The catastrophe he had vaguely feared in the afternoon had taken place, and Henry—of all people—was a witness of it.

"Then you didn't lose it, after all?" he asked, shaking himself free from the youth's clutch, and smarting under what he couldn't help feeling a personal indignity. "You were extraordinarily fortunate."

With a wild preliminary gesture, the Pole clapped his hands to the sagging pockets of his coat. "I lose? Ah, no! You brought me the chance—yes. Behold!"

From one pocket after another he began to unload his winnings, gold and notes in rich confusion, which

he heaped upon the table. The supply seemed exhausted.

"Very well done!" Peter Sanders, though utterly surprised, was glad to have his gloomy forebodings unrealized. "You must have broken the bank."

"Ah, yes, and more. It is two hundred thousand francs at least that we have won, you and I together. The one half will save my father from his troubles, and to mathematics he can give his remaining years. It has been accomplished—by your aid, kind sir. My father, he will not mind, I trust, though the system was—was at fault."

"I should think not," muttered Mr. Sanders. "You're a lucky dog, my boy, let me tell you. But you must understand, right here and now, that I'm not going to touch any of your money. It is all yours, do you see?"

"No, no! You must take the half—indeed it is so. How else could I have won?"

"I don't know how you won, as it is, and nobody else does. So that's all right. The money isn't mine, and it isn't going into my pocket. Besides, I don't need it."

There was no mistaking Mr. Sanders's determined renunciation. The young man looked dazed, and fingered the pile of coin absently, while Henry in the background did not altogether mask his astonishment at the turn events were taking.

"You—you mean it?" stammered the youth, a light of boundless gratitude dawning in his eyes. "Alas! how can I speak it? You are my—what one calls—my philanthropist." He seized the hand of his benefactor and kissed it solemnly, covering him again with self-conscious shame. A hot flush suffused Mr. Sanders's plump face.

"Nonsense. Nonsense," he said curtly. "I've done

nothing whatever for you, as a matter of fact—merely been a witness of your extraordinary luck, that's all. By the way," he added, eying the youth keenly, "have you dined, or did you forget about it?"

The Pole lifted his eloquent hands in protest. "It does not matter. Could I eat at such a moment? In Cracow will I eat."

"If you'll permit me to say so, you're more likely to get to a hospital than Cracow unless you take care of yourself. Henry!"

"Yes, sir." Henry had blotted every sign of interest or intelligence from his face, and stood at attention woodenly.

"Have supper served to us immediately. Champagne, I think, to celebrate the turn of luck and something solid to eat with it—beef, for preference."

"Yes, Mr. Sanders." Henry vanished from the room like a wraith.

"We'd better sit down while we wait, hadn't we?" suggested Peter Sanders. He felt a little fatigued by his companion's nervous excitement, and he was a good deal alarmed by the pallor of his haggard face. Unless the young fellow got some food quickly, to tide him over the moment of relaxed tension, fainting would be the least of the ills that might result. To be saddled with a sick Pole just as they were leaving for Egypt would be a nuisance.

Without a word, the youth dropped into the chair that Mr. Sanders indicated. His volubility had deserted him. When he tried to light a cigarette, his hand shook. "I do not know why," he murmured. "Suddenly I feel weak."

"Of course you do. What you need is a good supper and a night's sleep. Don't try to talk until my man brings in the supper. He won't be long."

It was, indeed, only a few minutes before Henry returned, followed by a couple of waiters whose eyes bulged when they saw the table laden with coin and paper. Mr. Sanders frowned: he was annoyed with himself at forgetting the display of riches.

"Get a bag," he said to Henry. "We'll stow away this stuff for the night in the manager's safe. You can take it down while we eat. Find M. Aicard and tell him that I'll explain in the morning."

At the sight of the food the young man roused himself, though he seemed awestruck by the lavishness of his host's entertainment. "It is too much," he protested. "You give me wealth, and you feast me like Lucullus."

Mr. Sanders smiled. "M. Aicard's establishment, though not bad in its way, isn't up to that standard, I'm afraid. If he knew how to keep his guests warm, for example, I might stay longer. Perhaps not, though," he mused. "I shall be rather glad to get away from Monte Carlo."

"You leave, then, also?" asked the Pole, beginning to revive with the first mouthfuls that he ate and drank.

"I'm going to-morrow." Mr. Sanders, pretending to eat in order to keep his friend in countenance, smiled at the effect of the restorative he had provided. Youthful appetite asserted itself, and with it buoyancy of spirits. In a few minutes they were chatting gayly, while Henry unobtrusively plied the guest with supper and dexterously saved his master from eating more than was good for him.

"I'm going to-morrow," repeated Mr. Sanders after a little, "and I hope never to see Monte Carlo again. I trust your experience hasn't given you a taste for it."

"Ah, no!" The young man shuddered, genuinely, it seemed. "Not again. Systems do not tempt me, for, after all, kind friend, it was but the tapping of your stick that saved me. Now I will go back and study again."

"What's your line, by the way? What do you study?" As a connoisseur of human nature, Peter Sanders wished to know: he hoped to solve the enigma of his strange acquaintance in this way.

The black eyes sparkled. "Oh, it is philosophy. Some day, it may be, yes, I shall write the great book upon ethics. With the riches you have given me I shall have no care but that."

"H-m-m!" said Mr. Sanders gravely. "You've been getting excellent practical experience, I should say."

"But I must not longer keep you from sleep," went on the youth, rising suddenly from the table. "If I could but thank you before I go!"

"Better leave that till morning," answered Mr. Sanders, laughing cheerfully. "You'll have to come round to get your money, you know. With your permission, I'll ask M. Aicard to help you change it into a more portable form."

Later, as Henry was leaving him for the night, Peter Sanders turned to him. "What would they say to all this in New York, do you suppose, Henry? The wolf in sheep's clothing, no doubt."

"Oh, no, sir—begging your pardon, Mr. Sanders—those who know you would say it was quite in character, I'm sure."

"Would they? A novel experience, anyhow. Don't fail to get me up as early as M. Aicard is likely to be about. I'd very much like to have our young friend reach Cracow without being robbed. And, by Jove!

I must really find out what his name is. I suppose Poles have names, even though one can't pronounce them. An odd thing he should be planning to study ethics on a pittance we raised this afternoon at the Casino! Has it ever struck you that this is a confused world, Henry? The trouble with me, evidently, is that I've never gambled with a moral purpose—before this." Mr. Sanders chuckled grimly as he dismissed his valet.

CHAPTER III

PATRIOTISM

IN WHICH LONELINESS CONSPIRES WITH THE LOVE OF COUNTRY
TO DRIVE MR. SANDERS HOMEWARD

EGYPT is a land of sunshine and genial warmth, and offers the traveller a vastly diverting programme. To Peter Sanders it gave, for a time, real comfort and distraction. Cheops and Rameses, Cleopatra and Ptolemy—the mighty company of the Egyptian dead—were his entertainers. Whatever their merits or demerits while living, they served a very useful purpose as far as Mr. Sanders was concerned. For some weeks he read about them and viewed their timeless memorials without discontent. The past was so very far off in Egypt that it made him forget the unfortunate present. Excursions up the Nile, and into such parts of the wilderness as Cook had tamed, set him wondering whether, in the freedom of the desert, he might not be able to find the oblivion that an exile needed.

Two things deterred him. On investigating, he found that it would be impossible for an elderly Occidental to become an anchorite without an appalling train of followers. It appeared that the simplicity of former days, when one could escape into the wilderness without fuss or ostentation, was a thing of the past. The imitator of Paul the Hermit or Anthony must nowadays submit himself to the extortionate care of a dragoman, and make greater provision for a bare month of contemplation than would have sufficed a Theban anchorite for a whole lifetime. Besides, Henry ob-

jected. Henry did not say so, but he showed quite plainly that he regarded the plan as highly unconventional and absurd. In the face of such difficulties, there was no use in going on.

By the early part of January, however, Mr. Sanders was so outdone with the kind of thing permitted him in Egypt that he was ready for any change whatsoever. History no longer served as an anodyne; archæology was a bore; palm-studded scenery became wearisome; the ready-to-wear luxury of cosmopolitan hotels grew intolerable.

"I'm sorry I brought you here," he said to Henry, one day. "It's worse than Monte Carlo. I'm afraid I shall forget my manners the next time I overhear a lady expressing her unconquerable devotion to the Sphinx."

At that moment, while Henry stood waiting for instructions, two young American girls (just free of school they looked) passed by. "And I think the mummies are simply dear!" said one to the other in unmodulated tones.

"That settles it." Mr. Sanders's jaw grew rigid. "Another week of this, Henry, would send me to a sanatorium, or more probably to some African equivalent of Matteawan. You would find it disagreeable, I'm sure, to be a witness against me in a trial for any crime of violence. You'd better engage passage for Brindisi at once."

Henry looked perplexed. Such tirades bewildered him. "And where do you wish to go then, sir? Shall you settle down in Italy for a time?"

"U-um—let me see. I don't much care, as long as we're out of this. We might try Taormina, I suppose, only I'm afraid we shouldn't escape feminine enthusiasm there. Women ought not to be allowed to travel,

Henry, or at least not without muzzles. If ever you get into Congress, I hope you'll introduce a bill to that effect."

"I'm very sorry, I'm sure, Mr. Sanders, but I'm not an American citizen, you see." It was never possible to depend on Henry's sense of humor.

"Quite so. I believe you've told me that before, though you're not exactly garrulous about your past. But don't you think the idea a good one?"

"If I may say so, sir"—Henry seemed unwontedly and quite humanly self-conscious—"I doubt whether women would submit to—to the regulation. My wife, Mr. Sanders——"

"You have a wife, then?" Henry had never before mentioned a wife.

"Oh, she's dead, indeed, sir—poor soul! But she did like to have her say. That's how I learned not to talk too much, if you know what I mean."

"I see." Mr. Sanders realized that, after receiving so violent a burst of confidence, he must get back to the sober ground of impersonalities. "The only safe thing, I suppose," he went on meditatively, "is to keep away from women altogether. Now I don't know where, except in one's own house, that can be accomplished. A nomad can't escape them, I'm afraid."

"If I may make bold with the suggestion, sir, I think I see a way." Henry's face brightened. "There's a manner of living in England, called lodgings, which might suit you. A gentleman need never see his landlady or a maid if his servant does his duty. I could look to that, Mr. Sanders, and I know many villages on the south coast where you'd never be troubled by women."

"And where the sun would sometimes shine?"

"Oh, sir, they call it the English Re-veera, and in

the spring of the year—after January, in fact—it's quite delightful, I assure you."

Thus it came about that Peter Sanders established himself, some ten days later, in Rosetree Villa, a comfortable cottage not far from Torquay. The journey from Egypt had been almost unbroken: a swift flight by rail from Brindisi to the Channel, a few days' encampment in London while Henry made his choice among resorts on the south coast, and finally the clean ugliness of the misnamed cottage. Mr. Sanders found himself possessed of two floors of the dwelling at a ridiculously moderate rent, and he protested to Henry that he neither felt the rooms too small nor minded their low ceilings. Outside, there were actually roses in the tiny garden, while the ugly interior was made tolerable by its immaculate cleanliness—like the plain face of the landlady, who was never visible save in the act of disappearance. Even the soft winds from off the Downs seemed washed free from all impurities, and filled the house with the clean aroma of fresh air. As to food and service, Henry saw to it that they were of the best.

"You were extraordinarily clever to hit on this, I think," Mr. Sanders said to his man, one day, a week or more after their arrival. "I haven't found anything so much to my liking since I left New York."

"I'm very glad it pleases you, sir," answered Henry primly. "It's not what any one would call grand, as you might say, but gentlemen sometimes like homely things for a change, I've noticed."

"It's the only time I've ever been in a simple place that was really civilized," Mr. Sanders mused. He had grown into the habit of thinking aloud to his valet, without expecting any response. "I suppose that's why it appeals to me. Decency usually requires elaboration, it appears. You have to take a lot of pains

in order to get something that isn't either fussy or offensive. Ever think of that, Henry?"

"I can't say I ever did, sir; but, begging your pardon, I must see to the marketing. The butcher takes a bit of looking to, not being much accustomed to serving the gentry." When observations were made to him that he could not hope to understand, Henry was always fertile in excuses to withdraw.

Peter Sanders chuckled contentedly and settled down to his reading. The change of scene, and his amusement with his new surroundings, made him more cheerful than he had been for many a day. Within the house there was no chattering to disturb him, and without no tourists or trippers got in his way. The handful of silent lodgers from other cottages in the neighborhood seemed even more bent than he on avoiding contact with strangers. Plethoric gentlemen and blowsy women stalked abroad rather solemnly, taking their exercise as if it were a nasty medicine, and their views of the sea and the Downs as a serious occupation. It made one contented with solitude to see other people so jealously cherishing loneliness. These nondescript persons who passed up and down the narrow street appeared to have no more real business in Devon than he, and to be grimly intent on making a mystery of their idleness. They gave one a tacit support by their very self-sufficiency.

It was doubtless the genial mood induced by bodily comfort and mental satisfaction that kept Mr. Sanders from feeling annoyed when he heard a knock at his door, and realized that some one else than Henry wished admittance. Though he had arranged to hold all communication with the household through Henry, he didn't resent this intrusion. Without looking up from his book, he shouted his permission to enter. The

thought flashed across his mind that he might as well see what his landlady looked like. The casual glimpses he had had of her heretofore had been so brief as to leave him quite in doubt as to her individuality. She had appeared chiefly as a large and shapeless back. For all he knew, she might have been any one of twenty broad-faced women whom he was growing accustomed to see along the village street.

He glanced up as she entered, hoping to fix her physical peculiarities, if she had any, on his mind. Doubtless Henry had deputed to her some task of domestic orderliness for which a feminine hand was better fitted than his own. She approached him noiselessly, in felt slippers, depressing her stout person as she came in a way that made him wonder for an instant whether she was lame. Then he realized that she was making the curtsy of obese middle age.

She gave him little opportunity, however, to observe her. With a fluttering, "For you, zur," she handed him a telegram, and retreated from the room as hastily as she had entered. Considering her build, one could but marvel at the rapidity of her movements. Mr. Sanders opened his not very important message from a London bookseller, read it, and flung it aside. He reflected with amusement that he had not even had time to thank her for her attention. Certainly no man's wish to be free from female interference had ever been more completely fulfilled than his own. As a matter of fact, he did not even know his landlady's name. This did not seem right. An invisible and anonymous landlady was an absurdity, after all.

When Henry next came in, he set about informing himself. "It has occurred to me," he said, "that I have never heard our good landlady's name. How is she known to her friends and business acquaintances?"

"Oh, sir, you mean Mrs. Trotter, no doubt. I hope she hasn't been annoying you while I've been out." Henry's tone conveyed a threat of reprisals if any one had been taking liberties with his employer.

"Not at all, not at all. She came in with a telegram, that's all, and she said nothing whatever. Mrs. Trotter, is it? She seems to be very agile in keeping out of one's way—remarkably agile for so large a person."

Henry's mouth closed in a firm line of satisfaction. "I think we shall have no trouble with Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Sanders. I've given very positive orders, and it's to her advantage to see to it that you aren't bothered."

"The soul of discretion, I'm sure," Mr. Sanders murmured. "But it does interest me that she can efface herself so completely. I shouldn't have supposed it possible in so small a house. Until this morning I've never positively identified her, and even now I shouldn't be sure of knowing her again."

"If you'd like to inspect her, sir"—Henry looked a little troubled—"I could of course have her in at any time you please. But I'll answer for it that she is a decent, clean creature with no vices, and the servant she has is very well managed. The girl knows her place."

"I'm sure of it, and I wouldn't upset your admirable arrangements for the world. It certainly wouldn't do to have a formal inspection of Mrs. Trotter. She might resent my curiosity after what you've doubtless told her about my taste for solitude."

"Not quite that, sir, but I have told her to keep herself and the maid in the background. In fact, I've made them understand that I should deal with the situation if they made you trouble."

"I must keep my eyes open, that's all." Mr. Sanders smiled. "It will occupy my mind in odd moments

to see whether I can't get a glimpse of the excellent Mrs. Trotter when she isn't looking. It's a grand thing, Henry, to have a serious purpose in life."

If Mr. Sanders fancied that he had set himself an easy task in his whimsical desire to observe Mrs. Trotter, he was doomed to disappointment. Though he amused himself by laying traps for her, day by day, she still eluded him. Past every ambush she glided unseen. When he returned unexpectedly from a stroll, hoping to discover her putting his sitting-room to rights, he managed to see only her broad back as she whisked dust-pan and broom into nether parts of the house. When he rang his bell during Henry's absence, he was rewarded merely by the frightened apparition of the maid, who breathed excuses while she listened to unnecessary orders.

By the end of ten days he found himself in a state of petty irritation against Mrs. Trotter, which was the more unreasonable since he had willed his seclusion from her and had approved Henry's downright orders. With cynical amusement, he recognized that his discontent with the landlady was a mere symptom; that he was already getting bored with the peaceful haven where he had hoped to linger through the winter and spring. He had been reading voraciously in the books that he had brought with him or had had sent down from London; but he found that he no longer enjoyed them so much as in the old days when he stole hours from wicked occupations for the pursuit of innocent knowledge.

"Where on earth am I going to end?" he asked himself, meditating over a letter from Peckham, from which he had learned that the district attorney appeared to be as implacable and as powerful as ever. "I can't go on changing my residence once a month for the rest

of my life, and I find it impossible to be cheerful anywhere for more than a few weeks. I might as well blow my brains out and have done with it." Suicide, however, was not really to be thought of: it would give the authorities in New York too rich a satisfaction.

In disgust, he renounced his studies, gave over any pretence of interest in Mrs. Trotter's comings and goings, and took to spending long half-days on the Downs. His color and appetite improved with the exercise, but he found no comfort in his physical well-being. Of what possible use to him was it to feel well when he could do nothing but read, and when reading was utterly tedious?

In the course of a solitary ramble, one afternoon, he sat down to rest and to look out over the Channel. He was high above the village, where the winds had free play, but he had found a little depression that gave him protection from the wilder gusts. In the bright sunlight he was sufficiently comfortable, and he watched with idle interest the traffic of the sea. Toys the vessels looked from his distant height, playthings tossed in a basin at the whim of a child. They had no more dignity than that, though some of them were doubtless the pride of their owners and captains. Mr. Sanders found them momentarily amusing, but he felt no inclination to take them seriously. After a few minutes, however, he spied one that awakened a different sentiment. She was a transatlantic liner, obviously, and a huge one: the kind of floating caravansary that he detested. Even in miniature, stuck down there on the flat sea, she gave an impression of power. She was headed westward, down the Channel and away to America.

Quite suddenly and unexpectedly, Peter Sanders grew cold. The long plume of smoke that trailed be-

hind the steamer seemed a mocking signal of farewell to the lonely exile on the hills. A sharp pang of nostalgia wrung him.

"Damn it all!" muttered Mr. Sanders between his teeth.

"Nobody's going to dispute you, you know." A man's amused voice just behind his ear made him turn. "Sorry if I startled you," went on the voice as he looked up into the twinkling eyes of the stranger. "I happened to be passing and stopped to look at the liner out there. That's how I heard you speak. No intention of intruding myself on your confidences. Deuced sound opinion, all the same!"

Mr. Sanders rose quickly and surveyed the man. He was struck at once by his military bearing and by the fact that his left arm was gone to the elbow. There was no mistaking the supple stiffness of the carriage—flexible steel was what the body suggested—nor yet the kindly hardness of the eye. The habit of command was there. A retired officer, Peter Sanders concluded, and a good fellow withal.

"I'm pleased to have you agree with me," he said simply. "I was believing myself alone against the world."

"One is never that," the gentleman went on. "At least, I've never failed to find somebody to curse with me. We damn different things, that's all. For instance, I damn my luck in losing this"—he touched his empty sleeve—"and you seem to have a grudge against some part of the merchant marine."

"Oh, no!" Mr. Sanders protested. "As a matter of fact, I'd be very glad to be aboard that extravagantly over-decorated steamer yonder."

"There'll be another in three days."

"Not for me, I'm afraid."

"That's very odd, if I may say so. I thought you Americans took steamers as we take the train to town."

"How did you spot me for an American?" The question was instinctive and inevitable on the part of Peter Sanders, though he knew it to be unworthy of him.

The tall stranger smiled again. "Two reasons: an Englishman of settled habits doesn't gaze regretfully at transatlantic liners headed westward, and you have the look of an American, you know. Compliment or not, I shouldn't have dared—what is it you say?—but in, if I hadn't felt sure of you."

Mr. Sanders laughed heartily. "I'm glad you did. I was feeling lonely. I came to the village down here for seclusion, and I've found more of it than I can stomach."

"Rum place," said the one-armed man thoughtfully. "I know what it's like. Old maids, and a lot of my kind who wouldn't speak to a long-lost brother unless he was brought in by the family solicitor."

"You're not staying here, then?"

"No, I live by myself in another solitude a few miles over into the hinterland." He tossed his head negligently towards the north. "Now and then I walk across to have a look at the sea. It's only seven miles."

Peter Sanders gazed at him in amazement. The man was no longer young, though he had the figure of youth. "You walk all that distance?"

"Have to," he answered promptly. "Nothing like it for keeping fit. There's a number of things I can't do, you see, and a soldier gets the habit of looking after himself. Did I tell you that I'm a soldier—or used to be?"

"I had somehow guessed it," said Mr. Sanders dryly.

"No doubt—no doubt. And there's good reason for a man to keep fit, these days, though even Roberts

can't make people believe it. Germany's going to strike when she gets ready, and when she does we'll need even the crocks. I might do my bit yet as drill-master, you know."

There was quiet conviction in the tone with which the words were uttered. They gave to Peter Sanders a new thought and a new feeling. The prediction might be wild and the prophet mad, but the possibilities they uncovered were highly exciting, to put it mildly.

"You think there's real danger of a war?" he asked.

"Danger? The war's coming, I tell you, and there's danger because only a handful of men will see it. We haven't much more of an army than you have in America, and we're slacking about on the edge of a volcano. That's why I make it my business to keep fit. If we were doing our duty, I'd potter about and probably drink myself to death in two years. As things are, I have to keep going, don't you see?"

Mr. Sanders pondered for a moment. "I don't believe I do," he admitted reluctantly. "If you haven't any other object in life than to wait for a catastrophe, I don't see why you care to wait."

"It's devilish interesting, when you think of it," said the crippled officer gently, as if to excuse his enthusiasm. "Of course, I don't mean that we'll knuckle under, you understand. Germany will hit us hard, and we'll need every man we've got, that's all. After we get our breath, we'll hit back. We might make 'em squeal when we've been at it for a few years. Oh, I prefer to see the thing settled before I go."

Astounded, Peter Sanders looked at the stranger. The point of view was very odd to an individualist like himself. On the other hand, perhaps it wasn't wholly unreasonable. If one regarded avoidance of the great catastrophe as a question of quitting a game one had

entered, of course a man wouldn't wish to get out; he might even go the extraordinary length of tramping weary miles to keep in trim for it. Only, the notion that an industrial nation like Germany would ruin its trade by making war was preposterous. Such conduct would be like the frivolity of the old kings whose chronicles he enjoyed because they were so little like real life.

"Look here," he said suddenly, so captivated by the novelty of the officer's idea that he forgot his position as a stranger in a very strange land, "what you say interests me very much, but the wind is getting colder up here. Won't you come down to the village with me and have a nip of something before you start back? Or tea, if you prefer the vintage of the country? I'd like to have you explain some things to me. We Americans are unceremonious, you know, but I keep a perfectly proper Englishman who would give you a decent cup of tea."

The tall man seemed to hesitate for a moment. Then he laughed. "I believe I will, since you're so good as to ask me. Tea will be rather a bracer."

"That's right. I'm glad to have some one talk to me, and I'd like to know—well, two or three things. Do you mind telling me why you feel so responsible about your country's future? I judge you've already done your share for her."

"Oh—that!" The man frowned slightly. "I got a nasty little wound in the Transvaal, and I fell into the hands of a fool who called himself a surgeon. That doesn't let me off, as far as I can see, though it keeps me out of things. I write a little and talk a lot, and nobody can wake up a besotted island like this. One has to keep pegging away."

"But why?" panted Mr. Sanders. They were going

down the hill at a pace that left him breathless. "It isn't on you, is it? Why should you care like that, if nobody will listen?"

"Oh, one does, you know. If I remember correctly, you Americans cared, a generation ago, and jolly well fought about it. Odd, isn't it? I suppose a good Englishman or a good American feels that he has a stake in things."

"I'm afraid I'm not a very good American, though I'll admit you caught me making sheep's eyes at a liner."

"There you are! You can't escape it. We call it patriotism at public meetings, but I dare say a less high-sounding word would be more accurate. Self-interest gets mixed up in it as well as fine feeling, no doubt. It's partly mere homing instinct, I suppose."

"Yes," said Mr. Sanders conclusively. "It's to be reckoned with. By the way, what makes you so sure that Germany is going to attack you? I've seen the question discussed in the papers, but I'm afraid I've skipped the articles."

Thereupon, for his guest needed no urging, Mr. Sanders was given thorough and painstaking instruction in the aims and ambitions of Germany—the kind of discourse that was called wrong-headed till it chanced to be proved true by event. The lecture continued, with casual interruptions, while they marched into Mrs. Trotter's sitting-room and while they there partook, the Englishman of strong tea, the American of weak whiskey and soda. If Henry was fluttered by the unexpected advent of a visitor, he showed it only by serving them with a manner that raised the seaside cottage to the highest social levels.

"Thanks very much," said the guest at length. "I must start back before nightfall. You're a good au-

dience, you know, and you've only yourself to thank if I've bored you. It's dangerous to encourage a crank."

"I've been tremendously impressed by what you've told me," Peter Sanders answered. "I'm afraid you've got the right of it. You were very kind to take the trouble."

All at once the visitor's self-command appeared to desert him. "Do you mind," he asked nervously, "do you mind telling me why you—eh—don't go back to the States if you wish to? It's quite unpardonable in me, but I'm frankly curious. You seem very comfortable here."

Mr. Sanders blinked and smiled. It wasn't pleasant to have to explain himself to a man of this kind—a man whose career had been so different from his own; but it had to be done. Honesty demanded it. "It's just because I'm so comfortable," he began, "that I want to go, I guess. I should be very uncomfortable, as it happens, on the other side. It's just possible that if I tell you who I am, you'll understand—and you'll probably curse me for getting you into bad company. To put it crudely, New York's a little hot for me at the moment. They made me close the most decently run gambling-house America has ever had, and so I'm here—or anywhere. My name is Sanders."

Much to the host's surprise, the officer took the announcement calmly. He smiled and nodded as he rose to go. "That's very odd," he said, "and quite enough to make you damn the universe. I see. I've heard of you, as it happens. Thanks for my tea, just the same. My name's Eynsham, by the way."

He shook Mr. Sanders's hand, and was off before there was time for more than an ejaculation of farewell. Henry was miraculously at the door to let him

out, managing to convey the impression that the narrow passage was a dignified entrance-hall. As Henry closed the door of the room, a moment later, there seemed to be unwonted sounds outside, excited and sibilant whisperings. Mr. Sanders wondered idly what had happened to rouse Mrs. Trotter or her maid into such an indiscretion, but he dismissed the thought and sat down with a book to meditate on what Mr. Eynsham had told him.

A little later, however, Henry came in with an apologetic air. "I'm exceedingly sorry, sir," he began without preface, "that Mrs. Trotter should so far have forgotten herself; but she hopes you will pardon her if the offence is not repeated. It was too much for her, I'm afraid, sir."

"What on earth do you mean?" Mr. Sanders was puzzled. "If you refer to the fact that she seems to have watched my caller leave the house, I don't see how it can be construed as a capital crime. You must admit that she manages to keep out of sight in an almost uncanny way."

"Quite so, Mr. Sanders," answered Henry austere. "She was excited, you see, sir. If I may make bold, I should like to say that I think you will see more of your own kind from now on. Other gentlemen will be sure to call."

Peter Sanders felt bewildered. What had Mrs. Trotter's excitement to do with his receiving Mr. Eynsham, and why should a so casual visitor attract others? "Nonsense, Henry!" he said sharply. "As a matter of fact, I should hate to see people of my own kind here; and I don't anticipate any sudden thaw in the ice of local society. Why should there be? Everybody here goes his own way in pleased discontent."

"But now that his lordship has been here, sir!"

Henry seemed, unexpectedly, almost as excited as Mrs. Trotter.

"His lordship?"

"Lord Eynsham, sir."

"Lord Eynsham?" Mr. Sanders whistled and raised his eyebrows. So it was a lord who had fluttered his dove-cotes—a peer of the realm in tweeds. He wasn't an American's idea of a lord, to be sure. Monocle and outstanding mannerisms were lacking, but his genuineness was attested by the evident state of the household.

"The Earl of Eynsham, sir," Henry went on firmly, extracting the fine savor of the name as he spoke. "Don't tell me you didn't know, sir!"

"I'm afraid I didn't." Peter Sanders was delightedly watching Henry's moment of weakness. "We met very casually up on the hill; so I asked him to come in for tea. We didn't exchange names until the last, of course, and he wasn't labelled. I hope I haven't committed any serious offence against society."

"Oh—no, sir." The man seemed impressed by his employer's calmness. "I can see how it was, between gentlemen. But Mrs. Trotter——"

"I sympathize with Mrs. Trotter," said Mr. Sanders amiably. "But there are various people in New York who would be even more surprised than Mrs. Trotter to know that a self-respecting peer, not to speak of a gentleman, should be willing to pass an hour in my company. Do you know where Lord Eynsham lives, by the way?"

Henry drew himself more tightly erect. "Mrs. Trotter informs me," he replied in his ordinary colorless tone, "that his lordship is now staying at Cressington, a big place of his some miles inland. It is said to be his principal seat, and a very grand house."

"I see." Mr. Sanders laughed. "I thought from what he said that he was in lodgings somewhere. He spoke of living alone."

"He has lost his wife," Henry explained, "and no doubt he was glad of your company, sir."

"Possibly. Sometimes a man would talk to the devil himself for the sake of the companionship of it."

From which it may be seen how weary of loneliness and exile Peter Sanders had become.

His thoughts were given a more definite direction, the next day, when he happened upon Mrs. Trotter at the front gate of Rosetree Villa.

She was scolding a grocer's boy. So engrossed was she in telling the youth about his sins that she did not notice Mr. Sanders's approach. Her language was vigorous; but only the general drift of her remarks was intelligible, for she spoke the unalloyed dialect that would be best understood by the offender. Peter Sanders stopped at a little distance, leaning on his stick and enjoying the scene. Several points in Mrs. Trotter's character, which had hitherto been obscure, now emerged clearly: she disapproved of slackness and inattention, and her rights could not safely be trodden upon by any grocer's boy whatsoever.

When the miserable wretch was finally allowed to slink away, Mr. Sanders advanced. "Good-morning, Mrs. Trotter," he said, raising his hat; "I'm glad to see you doing your part in keeping the business *morale* of your village up to standard."

"That John's enough to ma-uk one of God's angels swe-ar, to be sure," she responded glumly. Then she recollected to whom she was speaking, and blushed. "Not that I should be a-troublen you wi' the young sca-upegrace," she added.

"What has the rascal done?" asked Mr. Sanders.

"Bro-ut me es grocer's stuff a whole hour after ha should, ha did," Mrs. Trotter explained, twisting her hands in her apron.

"He'll not do it again very soon, I warrant."

"That ha will not. I'll not have it, the gurt hulken trolubber. But you'm standen whiles I gabble like a vool, Mr. Sa-anders."

"Oh, don't mind me, Mrs. Trotter," he said delightedly. "I've been afraid, of late, that my servant has given me a bad name with you. A lodger's rights don't go beyond a certain point. It's your house, after all, and I shouldn't wish to have you made uncomfortable in it."

"You'm a busy man, I know," answered Mrs. Trotter inflexibly. "These writen volks and scholars have to live quiet-like."

Mr. Sanders, a little aghast at the rôle into which he had been thrust, presumably by Henry's contrivance, was inclined to make light of his achievements in learning. "I'm afraid I'm not much of a scholar, Mrs. Trotter. Henry only meant to convey that I like a quiet house for reading, that's all."

"All men volks be the za-um vor that. Two men I've buried, zo who should know better?"

"In any case, you succeed admirably in making things comfortable for me. When I have to leave, I shan't expect to find lodgings anywhere else so much to my liking."

"I ta-uk it kindly to hear you zay zo," Mrs. Trotter replied, unbending a little from her extreme dignity. "But you'm bain't leaven zoon, I hope."

"I can't tell precisely when I may have to go." Mr. Sanders drew back from the gate as he spoke, and turned up the path. "My plans are rather indefinite."

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"Ho-um's best," commented Mrs. Trotter sententially, moving forward in turn.

"Home's best!" murmured Peter Sanders as he went in. "No doubt it is, at least for Mrs. Trotter. What it would be like for me is quite another matter."

Nevertheless, some innate simplicity of heart in him made him react strongly to Mrs. Trotter's sentiment. It reinforced the train of thought that had been started by his talk with Lord Eynsham. An outcast he might be, but he abhorred the thought of becoming an expatriate. Besides, he was finding it very difficult to live abroad with any peace of mind. He had tried London and Paris; he had tried the Riviera and Egypt; he was discovering the worm in the bud, even of Rose-tree Villa.

For some days he meditated on these things, while he took his solitary rambles or sat by his fire with a book in his hand. He tried to persuade himself that he didn't care to set foot on American soil again unless he could have what he thought his rights. His country had repudiated him: he had every inducement to forswear his allegiance. He even went so far as to read certain philosophers who supported the thesis that patriotism is a wicked mistake.

This new philosophy did not satisfy him, however. He couldn't put his finger on any logical weakness in the reasoning, but he felt sure it was there. He had only to look out on the Channel of a bright day and watch another liner steaming westward, to be sure that the pull of one's country couldn't be pure fallacy. Try as he would to believe himself exempt from all responsibilities to his native land, he found that he was left with an unaccountable longing to go back to it. Lord Eynsham was right: he had a stake in the country of his birth. The feeling was doubtless a queer mixture, and far from noble, but it existed.

Patriotic nostalgia can ordinarily find a ready cure. The specific is an ocean voyage in moderate discomfort, with a strong dose of custom-house manners at the end. Recovery is ordinarily immediate. The case of Peter Sanders was not so simple of treatment as that, unfortunately. He could pay for the most luxurious stateroom on any liner, but he could not command a safe abiding-place when he had once landed. He began to desire ardently to go back to America, without knowing at all how it could be done.

If he should return to his own house, whither the two great rooms full of books invited him, he had every reason to suppose that legal prosecution would follow. He would have been very glad, now that he had tried the experiment of living abroad, to spend his days among his books, with no human companions save a few trusted friends who, for old times' sake, would not have minded the loneliness of the once feverishly gay house. They would have made nothing of his passion for the Middle Ages and the Latin satirists, to be sure, but they would have formed an adequate circle, full of reminiscence and yet tactful of reference. He had been chastened by the disappointments of the past months until he no longer demanded revenge and the opportunity to carry on his business as before. He would have been well content, he thought, to be let alone in rigorous solitude.

All that was made impossible by the implacable wrath of the district attorney. Furthermore, he did not dare to take another house in New York or in any other town of any size, for that would at once arouse suspicion and subject him to annoyance. Though a modest man, always, he realized his baleful notoriety. Every one would think he was starting what the preachers amiably called a "gambling-hell." He might buy a place in the country, of course, there to bury

himself in solitude, but he had learned that he could not safely cut himself off altogether from living society. Besides, he was as ignorant as a baby about the way to get such a place, or to manage it when once it had been acquired. He didn't even know where, within a radius of fifteen hundred miles, he should like to settle down. And if he began to make inquiries of a metropolitan agent, the reporters would gather like bees, eager to prepare the honeyed news for the breakfast-tables of all America.

As for living in hotels at home, that would be even more impossible. He couldn't escape notice for very long in any hotel on the continent, he well knew. Every time he went out or came in, an interviewer would be at hand. Democratic America has substituted the espionage of the press for the secret police supported at great cost by more backward countries. Peter Sanders felt that he could never endure the publicity of such a life. Besides, neither in New York nor elsewhere, he felt sure, would he be welcomed as a permanent guest. He would give any house an undesirable reputation.

Yet, when he had canvassed all the possibilities and had found them impracticable, he looked out on the Channel and echoed Mrs. Trotter's sentiment. "Home's best!" Although by no means a profane man—rather careful, indeed, about preserving the decencies of speech—Peter Sanders epitomized the plight in which he found himself by uttering the single word "Hell!"

Depression, as we all know, is the commonest symptom of nostalgia. Mr. Sanders moped. He failed to notice that Mrs. Trotter was supplying his table with delicacies to which she would not have attained, with the best will in the world, without the expert tutelage of Henry, or that Henry was looking out for his needs

with exaggerated care. He was losing the appetite he had gained, and he was so obviously in low spirits that his servitors were troubled. If not a hero to Henry, he was at least a very sacred charge, which had come to be regarded with something akin to tenderness. Henry's concern, to be sure, could be shown only by greater deftness of ministration, a lighter step, and a more inconspicuous presence. It was not of his code to be demonstrative. Naturally enough, the perfection of his service failed to relieve Mr. Sanders: it merely increased his sense of boredom, of loneliness, and of longing.

At length came an evening when both soup and sole were rejected somewhat petulantly, and the remainder of an excellent dinner left almost untouched. Henry was driven by despair to the point of taking the initiative.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Sanders," he began, after clearing his throat nervously, "but do you mind my asking whether you think the Devonshire air continues to agree with you?"

"I'm sorry to have neglected your dinner," Mr. Sanders answered, thinking the man's pride was hurt, "but I didn't seem to feel like eating. No trouble with the air, I'm sure."

"You haven't been eating properly, if you don't mind my saying so." Henry betrayed his troubled mind by his insistence on this fundamental symptom.

"Haven't I? I haven't noticed, really."

"Exactly so, Mr. Sanders. I've been afraid that I chose this place unfortunately. Possibly it's too quiet, sir, after all. But other gentlemen, besides Lord Eynsham, will soon be calling. They are just making up their minds to come, Mrs. Trotter tells me."

"It wouldn't be too quiet here if I didn't have a guilty

conscience, I suppose," said Mr. Sanders, trying to make a jest of the matter. "Anyhow, certain people in New York who've cornered righteousness would feel very sure that I'm the slave of my own vices."

"Oh, sir!" Henry was clearly shocked, yet he was not to be put off. "But ought you to stay on in a climate that doesn't seem to agree with you?"

"Want to get back to America?" Mr. Sanders plumped the question at him abruptly and watched for its effect. His eyes were never so keen as when they were half veiled, and he dropped his lids now.

"It isn't a question of what I would like, but what is best for your health, sir." Henry's deference was not to be caught napping.

Mr. Sanders laughed. He was amused but not comforted. "I don't mind expressing my own preferences," he said. "I'd like, the worst way, to be on United States soil, only I don't see how I can manage it. There's no chance at present of their letting me live in my own house, you understand."

"I see, sir."

"And I don't happen to remember any other place, east or west, that I'd care to settle down in—any place I've ever seen. I'm an old dog, Henry, and I do my new tricks badly."

"I dare say it's partly your liver, sir. This soft weather in winter is most depressing for gentlemen."

"Hang it all, man!" For the moment Mr. Sanders was vexed by Henry's characteristic attempt to translate a psychological difficulty into a physical ailment. "Don't you know that you and Mrs. Trotter, between you, have cockered me up till I'm in fighting trim, even if I haven't eaten like a horse, these last days? Can't you see what's the matter with me? Haven't you ever wished you were back here in England,

where you were born, when you've had to stay in America?"

Among so many questions, Henry had the chance to select one for reply, and did so with the main issue in mind. "I think I see what you mean, Mr. Sanders," he said mildly. "No doubt you'd be all the better for going back to America."

"But come, have you never felt that way?"

Henry hesitated. It was his one unsatisfactory quality as a companion that he was always curiously unwilling to lay his cards on the table. "I quite understand," he said after a moment. "I remember being very homesick for England at one time, but that was before—before I formed ties on the other side."

"Ties?"

"Before I married, I mean. Marriage is very engrossing, as you know, sir."

Peter Sanders snorted. "I don't know anything about it, as a matter of fact."

"I mean that one finds it so, what with one thing and another." As if ashamed at having shown himself more than an automaton, the man hurried on, stumbling over his words in an obvious attempt to escape any further revelation of his past. "I've no doubt it would be possible to get passage at once, if you wish to go back to America. Shall I wire to town, sir?"

"The difficulty is—don't you see?—I shouldn't know what to do with myself after I got there."

"You might go south. Gentlemen often do at this season of the year, I've noticed."

A swift review of the winter resorts he had known in times past made Peter Sanders shake his head. To the places where he would be welcomed he had no desire to go, and he had no wish to intrude where his presence would be considered undesirable. "Gentlemen

do," he admitted aloud, "but that doesn't solve the problem for me. The fact is, I'm something of a public character in America, and I couldn't settle down anywhere without attracting a certain amount of attention—all of it unfavorable. Over here it's different: nobody knows me except booksellers, gamblers, and travelling compatriots."

Henry stroked his chin meditatively. "I'm sure, sir, that no one could object to your company unless he was very—very prejudiced. Now Lord Eynsham——"

"Lord Eynsham! Lord Eynsham made a mistake and proved himself a good sport. As a matter of fact, everybody has prejudices. I have, myself—very strong ones. And my name has been blasted beyond repair, I'm afraid. I'm what is called a symbol, Henry: I stand to my countrymen for everything destructive of the homely and primitive virtues, everything that ought to be covered up and ignored."

"But by another name—" Henry looked at his master doubtfully.

Mr. Sanders smiled. "You think I'd smell as sweet as any other rose? Perhaps I should, only I don't see myself masquerading like that. I haven't got to the point of concealing my name, I hope. Peter Sanders, *alias* Jack the Juggler, *alias* Faro Dick!"

"The name might be a perfectly inconspicuous one," Henry pleaded with unaccustomed boldness. He was determined, apparently, that something should be done, and was willing to run the risk of seeming officious to that good end.

"Even if I were called John Smith, I don't see how that would help me. How long do you think it would take the hotel clerks and reporters of Palm Beach to discover me? I'm good for a column, any time."

The valet looked shocked at this flippancy, and for once allowed a trace of irritation to express itself in his voice. "But you do wish to go back to America, I can see, Mr. Sanders. There are a great many places in the country, I'm sure, where you wouldn't be recognized if it weren't for the name. I mean, of course, sir, resorts where inconspicuous people go—not the kind of thing you've been accustomed to, but decent enough for all that."

Peter Sanders reflected. There was probably something in what Henry said. Although he had had a wide experience of men in his business, and had knocked about in most corners of the country, it might well be that certain sections of society had escaped his observation. Possibly it would be feasible, under another name than his own, to see how such people lived. If practicable, the adventure might be amusing.

"So you think I'm less notorious than I suppose?" he inquired at length. "Possibly I am."

"It isn't my place to suggest, sir, and I hope you won't think me forth-putting"—after his mild outburst Henry was apologetic—"but I'm troubled about your health, Mr. Sanders."

"I'll think it over, though there's no reason why you should worry about my crotchets. I'm a useless person at best, and it doesn't make any special difference where I go or what I do."

Henry set his lips firmly. "Not at all, sir. It makes the very greatest difference to me. If I may make bold to say so, it's my business to look out for you; and I can't let you go about getting knocked up, sir."

"Very well. I'm in your hands, of course." Mr. Sanders rose from the table where he had been sitting. "Only please don't make me do anything too disgrace-

ful for my health's sake. My reputation isn't good enough to stand it, you know."

"Then I may make inquiries?"

Mr. Sanders paused in the doorway and considered. "Oh, yes," he said after a moment's hesitation. "How you're going to find out anything about the obscurer winter resorts of the Southern States, while we're in Devonshire, I don't know. But if you can find a way, I'm game to try it. Mrs. Trotter's undoubtedly right: one gets homesick."

As he thought over the whole matter, later, he saw many advantages in the plan proposed by Henry. For one thing, if he assumed a name that didn't belong to him, he could really be himself; whereas, while he remained Peter Sanders, he could never be wholly natural. As Peter Smith, say, he might move inconspicuously within any sedate circle of comparative obscurity that he chose, and find there the companionship he craved. Peter Sanders, the dethroned king of gamblers, must keep to a splendid isolation or suffer from the fierce light that beats upon any one whom the newspapers have crowned; but with the name discarded, he might escape from publicity, and so regain his citizenship in the world of reputable men. He detested professional gamblers as a class quite as much as he despised their victims. Yet in spite of the momentary doubts about himself that had assailed him in the Casino at Monte Carlo, he kept faith in his own integrity. His hands might have been soiled by long association with scalawags, but he couldn't help thinking of himself as a decent person. He was the less content to live as a vagabond and a pariah.

At all events, he decided, the chance was worth taking. He would begin life over again—and see. He had for so long been staggering under a scandalous

reputation that it would be a relief to have none at all. He would try the experiment of living as his matured tastes inclined him—as a gentleman should. For the time being, in any case, he would cease to be a figure of public scorn. In a world that knew the name, but not the heart of faro, he might safely make pleasant acquaintances. He even dreamed of finding there a friend or two, like-minded with himself, who would share with him some of his adventures into the world of the past.

CHAPTER IV

JUSTIFICATION

IN WHICH IS SHOWN SOME EXCUSE FOR A CONTINUANCE OF THE
HERO'S MISANTHROPY

Two weeks later, at the Twenty-third Street Ferry in New York, Peter Sanders changed his name to Paul Silcox. The identity of the initials was a happy thought of Henry's to avoid the necessity of purchasing new trunks. Sufficiently provided with funds for the needs of many months, and accompanied always by Henry, he entered a stateroom on a southbound express and arrived, the following night, at an unfashionable town in the heart of Florida, a free but suspicious man.

In Orlando, the newly arrived Mr. Silcox soon found himself a figure of importance, but not of notoriety. As the occupant of the best rooms in a well-conducted, quiet hotel, and the only resident of the hostelry with a man-servant, he became the centre of interest for the gregarious circle of guests. By his unassuming affability he promptly won their liking and gained their confidence. Persons of simple tastes, and ample but not extraordinary incomes, who for reasons of health or idleness had sought this region of orange-groves and lakes among the pines, they regarded the newcomer as a most satisfactory addition to their number. They even boasted a little about him to their acquaintances in other hotels, which had no guest with a man-servant. To drivers of motor-cars and other purveyors of comfort Henry gave out discreetly that his master was a

New Yorker, who had retired early in pursuance of his desire for cultivated leisure. Mr. Silcox, reserved but never taciturn, filled without difficulty the part created for him by his valet. It required little acting. Within a fortnight, he basked in the sunshine of popularity and esteem. He had enjoyed a confidential chat with the mayor of the town, and, as a northerner of wealth, he had been offered the chance to buy two orange-groves.

One sunlit morning, Mr. Silcox was sitting on the eastern veranda of the hotel, reading Juvenal and making mordant reflections upon life.

"They're a pack of fools," he murmured inaudibly, "and I'm a bigger fool than any of them. They would cry with fright, I suppose, if they knew that Peter Sanders was about, damn them! But they're a good sort in their way. I like them, yes; and they treat Paul Silcox just as well as they would a successful manufacturer of chewing-gum. They're nice people, and it's a shame to take them in. But I'm just the same, whether I'm Paul Silcox or not. I'm perfectly fit for Sunday-school, and I always knew it. It's nothing but damnable hypocrisy that got me into trouble. Hypocrisy!"

He gazed across a stretch of dusty grass to a thicket of palmetto-trees, pursing up his heavy lips to relieve the agitation of his mind. Except for this slight movement, he presented a figure of somnolent ease as he thrust out his fat legs from the depths of a gayly cushioned willow chair. His flannels of spotless white gave no better evidence, one would have said, to the care bestowed on his body, than his round, well-shaven face to a conscience free from reproach. What lurked behind the drooping eyelids no observer could well have made out, save that a sudden light sometimes flashed

there. He lifted his eyes now, momentarily, as he heard steps behind him.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Silcox, good-morning. I trust that we're not intruding."

At the greeting, Mr. Silcox turned his head and made the preliminary wriggle essential to quitting his deep chair. "Good-morning, Doctor Henderson, good—" he began, at the same instant.

"Don't, I beg of you, don't rise," said the elderly clergyman, who now stood with outstretched hand in front of the chair. "Don't let us disturb you, don't. Eh—allow me to introduce to you my friend Mr. Clapp, Mr. Silcox." He indicated by a slight turn of the head a tall young man in blue serge who stood beside him.

Mr. Silcox shook hands gravely with Doctor Henderson, who was said to be the rector of a large church in New England, now enjoying a holiday to prepare himself for the severe labors of the Lenten season, and he transferred his hand uncomplainingly to the strong grasp of his new acquaintance.

"Very glad to meet you, Mr. Clapp," he said cordially. "A warm morning, doctor! I've been too languid to stir. Do sit down, both of you. Let me pull up some chairs."

With a desperate struggle he got on his legs, only to find that the young man was already placing two chairs beside his own. Not to be unemployed, and pathetically grateful for company, as always, he suggested that lemonade would be refreshing.

"You are very kind, very kind," responded Doctor Henderson; "that would indeed be delightful."

"Thanks very much," said young Mr. Clapp, fanning himself with his straw hat and brushing back his curly light hair with his hand.

"Pardon me for one moment," said Mr. Silcox. "I'll just step in and speak to my man."

Mr. Clapp looked inquiringly after their host as he disappeared. "Have you known Mr.—Mr. Silcox long, uncle?" he asked.

"Oh—ah, I met him last week, Gresham. Why do you inquire?"

"Oh, pure habit. Looks a bit like a fellow I used to know," remarked the young man, eying with some surprise the copy of Juvenal on the arm of Mr. Silcox's chair. "Queer likeness, that's all."

"Not an uncommon type of face," remarked the clergyman, "but a very delightful and intelligent gentleman. Mr. Silcox has lived much abroad, he tells me. Most of us have—eh—forgotten our classics."

At this point their host returned, and all three seated themselves to await the arrival of the lemonade.

"Mr. Clapp," explained Doctor Henderson, "is the son of an old and very dear friend of mine, Jonas Clapp of Chicago. You may have met him in the—eh—business world? In any case, you will know his name as a merchant prince. A wonderful man, Mr. Silcox, 'not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'"

"Oh, come, Uncle Joseph!" interrupted Gresham Clapp, fidgeting slightly with the discomfort of the young at hearing their parents taken seriously. "Dad's all right, but he's no Bible character."

"My dear Gresham," returned Doctor Henderson in mild reproof, "perhaps I am quite as good a judge of that as you: I have, presumably, a closer acquaintance with the Word of God, and I knew your father a long while before you were born."

Young Mr. Clapp burst into a generous laugh, in which Mr. Silcox joined tentatively. The conversation

seemed to be straying into regions whither he had seldom ventured.

"Your father's name is, of course, perfectly familiar to me, sir," he began, "though——"

"It would be fairly hard to get into Chicago without seeing it," said the young man, still smiling.

"A most remarkable extension of business, most remarkable!" murmured the clergyman. "Mr. Clapp," he went on, turning to Mr. Silcox, "arrived only this morning, and was good enough to come to see me at once. He tells me that he has been exploring the Everglades, and he has stopped at Orlando on his way northward, to look after certain business interests for his father."

"Oh, nothing important!" protested the new arrival. "Just a few things that Son couldn't possibly go wrong in, you know."

"Did you find the Everglades an interesting region?" asked Mr. Silcox politely. "Ah, the—lemonade."

Henry, imperturbable and seemingly oblivious to everything but the dexterous management of a small silver tray, served Doctor Henderson first. As he stood looking down on Mr. Clapp, he allowed one eyelid to flicker. He glanced hurriedly at his master, then resumed his stolidity of expression without delay. Beatific content overspread Mr. Silcox's face. Gresham Clapp, on his part, appeared to find something in the servant's masked features that interested him. From the moment of Henry's approach, he watched the man's automatic movements as if fascinated.

"Jove! but it's good to look at a civilized servant again," he remarked, as if to justify his perhaps observable interest, when Henry had withdrawn beyond earshot. "The hotels where I've been staying—well, their notion of elegance was to keep the chickens out of the dining-room during meal-hours."

The talk thereupon drifted into harmless comment upon the failings of hostelrys in various parts of the world. Doctor Henderson knew the politer sections of Europe and the regions beloved of pleasure-seekers at home, north and south; Gresham Clapp had roughed it for a year in the West; while Mr. Silcox contributed eclectic information gathered in America and abroad. He forgot to be cynical in his enjoyment of the oddly sorted friends. To the open-hearted breeziness of the younger man he responded with a gayety that was genuine and unaffected. Never before, it seemed to him, had he met a youth of this type, at least not on the same terms. Possibly, he reflected in a submerged train of thought that kept pace with the actual conversation, he had been too warily critical of the youngsters who came to his house in the old days. But they had seemed to him, and they seemed to him still, a pack of brainless idiots whose money would be better placed anywhere than in their own pockets. This Clapp was different: straight of mind as of figure, sensitive to the impacts of life, clearly enough, yet capable of defending his own. Mr. Silcox was a little amused by his sudden impulse to friendliness, but he was by no means inclined to resist it.

He was surprised by the swift approach of the luncheon-hour, and he gladly forsook his solitary table in order to continue his conversation with Mr. Clapp, who was staying on with Doctor Henderson till afternoon. Luncheon ended, they joined a group of ladies and gentlemen who were paying a leisurely visit to a young and anæmic alligator in a basin across the stretch of lawn. Mr. Silcox relapsed for a moment into the mood habitual with him, when he noted that every one not already known to every one else was delighted, or at least pleased, to make the acquaintance; but he pulled himself up with the reflection that he himself

was glad to be in the company. He noted also that the consideration paid to Gresham Clapp seemed to be due quite as much to his sponsors as to his youthful charm. And he himself, Peter Sanders really, was treated with the same deference as Doctor Henderson.

A delicate reference to the boy's much-advertised father started the conversation in familiar channels as they returned to the veranda. The entire circle seemed to have become fast friends, and they forsook reserve. They chattered trivially of important things, importantly of trivial things: talk in which the amiable Mr. Silcox's soul delighted, even while it revolted him. For the sake of being one with them, he could equably endure the descent into empty-headed dulness, which they appeared to love. To be warmed by their appreciative esteem, he would huddle with them in the hovels of gossip. They were, after all, the world.

Before young Mr. Clapp's departure to go about his business, Mr. Silcox had invited him, along with Doctor Henderson, to make an expedition on the following day to the renowned Sulphur Springs.

"Henry," he said later, while preparing for his early dinner, "I want you to go over to Smith's and order a motor for me at half-past nine to-morrow morning. I'm taking a couple of friends to the Sulphur Springs they talk so much about, and we shall be gone for lunch; so please have some baskets of things ready."

"Yes, sir. But—beg pardon for my asking, Mr. Sanders——"

"Silcox! Silcox! Henry, do be careful."

"Mr. Silcox, I beg pardon, sir. But do you mind my asking if they are the gentlemen that were with you this morning, sir?"

"Why, yes, as a matter of fact, they are. But what of that? Didn't you like their looks, Henry? Em-

inently respectable gentlemen, I assure you, who won't corrupt my morals."

"Only, sir, I think I've seen the younger gentleman before; and you know that I remember faces, Mr.—Silcox."

"I know you do. You've a lynx's eye, Henry. But what's the harm in seeing a man twice?"

"It isn't twice, sir," said Henry earnestly, pausing as he folded a white flannel coat with elaborate precision. "I've seen this gentleman several times, and I think it was in your—you understand—in your house. I hope you'll be careful, sir."

"That's nonsense, all nonsense. You've got the idea on your brain that I'm known everywhere, and you're nervous about it. We both are, for that matter. But this is a very different place from Palm Beach. We're quite safe here. There's not one chance in a thousand that these people would connect me with Peter Sanders. As for Mr. Clapp, he's not a young fool from Fifth Avenue, but a busy young chap from Chicago who knows the Rockies better than Broadway."

"Very good, sir," said Henry in the most subdued of tones, "but I hope you'll keep an eye on him, all the same."

Mr. Silcox laughed amiably. He knew the depth of his attendant's devotion; it was his closest tie with humanity. He felt a genuine affection for the man, and he never resented being fussed over. But Henry was sometimes absurd.

"I'll look out for myself," he said, as he left the room.

In the cool quiet of the next morning, while the freshness of the night was still perceptible in the sun's heat, he waited with Doctor Henderson before a blazing fire in the hotel office.

"I hope that Gresham won't be late," fumed the clergyman gently. "Young people are so careless about time—so careless!"

"Oh, I'll bank on Mr. Clapp; and, anyhow, we've a long day before us," remarked Mr. Silcox calmly.

"Yes, Gresham may be trusted to do whatever he puts his mind on," Doctor Henderson agreed. "Though he was unsuccessful in his collegiate career, which was a great trial to his family, he has his father's incisive character. A very remarkable man, Mr. Silcox, very remarkable, who has been, I may say, greatly calumniated."

"The American public is fond of baiting any one who succeeds, I've noticed." Mr. Silcox made the observation with personal feeling, though Doctor Henderson could not well be aware of that.

The whirl of the motor and the entrance of young Gresham, fresh-faced and shining-eyed, were simultaneous.

"Just in the nick of time, I see!" he exclaimed, shaking hands heartily with the two gentlemen. "A grand day, isn't it? Nothing to beat it in winter this side of Montreal."

Outside, they found Henry stowing away capacious hampers in a rakish touring-car. It was part of his infallibility to provide the last refinements of civilization from nothing at all. In excellent humor, they said good-bye to an interested knot of idlers, ladies with the novels and the silken bags that represented their mental resources, gentlemen with cigars. Out through streets of slatternly houses, and along a dusty road that soon darted into the cover of pines, they drove at good speed. The larger orange-groves, resplendent masses of rich green spotted with the high lights of golden fruit, were soon left behind. Now and again they skirted a blue

lake set in white sand; infrequently they roused a desolate village or passed an orange-grove that had strayed from its kind. For the most part they were among the pines, or speeding among undulating wilds stripped of trees but not devoid of the fascination that luminous air gives to desert spaces. When the day grew hot, they turned from the main road and followed devious trails that led, ill-marked and unmade, into the depths of the forest, where flowers of strange tints grew in ragged clusters and the branches were festooned with moss. At a seemingly perilous speed, they twisted their way among the trunks of trees, dashed to the bottom of little gullies, and passed noiselessly across levels carpeted with the cinnamon brown of pine-needles.

"A marvellous country—quite marvellous!" ejaculated Doctor Henderson, as they drove through a semi-tropical jungle that gave the effect of a stage picture, and emerged on the bank of a crystalline pool surrounded by lofty trees.

"But not a patch on the Everglades," Gresham Clapp declared with conviction.

"I had pictured them as huge swamps, beautiful only to a mosquito," commented Mr. Silcox.

"Not a bit of that," said his young friend. "Oh, of course, there are insects; but it's mighty pretty down there, and it's going to be the great orange-growing country."

"Ah, I hadn't suspected that," said Mr. Silcox, feeling a genuine interest in his guest's enthusiasm, at least, if not in the great marshes. The youth of Fifth Avenue, as he remembered them, were eager only to squander their allowances. This boy gave him a vicarious attachment to the forces that were developing the earth, not plundering it.

"Your father has—eh—investments in the Ever-

glades, has he not, Gresham?" inquired Doctor Henderson.

"He's put in a little money," the young man answered; and he went on with what seemed to be a shade of disgust in his voice: "he'll never sink much anywhere unless he's in a position to run the show. But I'm planning a little haul of my own down there."

While they ate Henry's excellent luncheon on a wooden platform above the spring, while they drifted in a rude skiff down the stream that emerged, the color of turquoise, from the bubbling pool, Mr. Silcox had no difficulty in drawing Gresham out. Much of the way home, he made him talk. He was taken with his new friend, who responded with candor to every advance. Doctor Henderson fell silent except for occasional heavy comment. Mr. Silcox learned that Mr. Clapp, with the adventurous spirit of his race, was planning to develop a considerable tract for orange-growing in a fertile paradise where frost never came and the scale was unknown. He learned, too, that the boy's father refused to support him in his magnificent enterprise, declaring, so the son said, that he had already sunk enough money in the swamps. Single-handed and with perfectly inadequate capital, but optimistic and energetic like all budding financiers, the heir of the Clapp millions was preparing his own *coup*. Mr. Silcox found himself regretting that he could not take a hand in this exciting game, that circumstances would prevent him even from investing money in it. Silently he cursed the district attorney.

They parted in the late afternoon, the best of friends. Gresham Clapp's business in Orlando, he informed the others, would take him a week's time at least. During the following days, morning, afternoon, and evening, whenever he was not busy with orange-growers and

orange-packers, he drifted into the hotel. He took his friends to see how the fruit was cultivated, washed, and shipped. He let fall much interesting information about the conditions of raising and marketing oranges. More and more to the exclusion of Doctor Henderson, as the days passed, he was in the company of Mr. Silcox. He was not so discourteous as forever to be talking of his business schemes; he contributed entertainingly to any conversation, and he knew how to listen. In his breezy way he was always respectful to the older man. He asked advice very freely; he spoke of his difficulties with the utmost frankness, though he laughed at caution and blew care to the winds.

Day by day Mr. Silcox's pleasure in the young man's society increased, and with it his interest in orange-growing. Occasionally, when alone in his rooms, he saw the humorous aspect of the situation and laughed at himself rather bitterly for caring so absurdly about the cultivation of oranges. The speedy and sure returns of the roulette-wheel were more in his line than the slower bounties of the earth. He put it to himself in this way, whenever he thought of the matter at all, not reflecting that his attitude towards Gresham Clapp was the really remarkable factor in the case. Something like an intimacy had sprung up between the two men, despite the disparity in their years and the veil that Mr. Silcox must, of necessity, hang across his own past. From a purely generous motive, he regretted the necessity. His heart expanded under the influence of his friend's youthful charm, glowed with a warmth unknown to it for years. At length it had found the human relationship it craved.

Mr. Silcox was conscious of wishing to make as much of this as possible, of wishing, indeed, to make it a part of his life. He found himself desirous of becoming a

proper associate for young Gresham, and he was astonished. He was willing to pay any price to grapple his friend to him—to go the length of sacrificing opinions and prejudices even about himself and his career. He rejoiced in the companionship of an unspoiled heart. He wished, moreover, to express his gratitude in some tangible form; he schemed incessantly to fill the young man's hours of leisure with delight. He wanted no return for what he gave; the recompense had come before the benefit, indeed. But he was glad to receive the homage of unaffected comradeship, always so flattering a tribute to age or middle age from youth.

For the first time in his sensational career, the conscience of Peter Sanders really awoke. He had felt uncomfortable twinges at Monte Carlo, but he had not faced the question fairly as a matter of right and wrong. Now he had to. Might it not be something more than public hypocrisy that kept him from dealing straightforwardly with this honest youth? Would he care to tell Gresham Clapp that he was Peter Sanders, the notorious gambler? If not, there must be something wrong in the whole business, for obviously his friend took no opinions ready-made and was not prudishly sensitive about the wagging tongue of rumor. But here he was, as Paul Silcox, quite unable to help a man he liked, and at the same time enter upon a business venture of certain profit, simply because he could not bear to disclose his identity to the most charitable and generous of beings. He felt himself bound hand and foot by his own folly. He recalled apothegms he had read about sin's nasty way of recoiling upon its perpetrator. He grew savage with the faithful Henry, who represented his past, and rebuked him severely, one night, for venturing to renew his warning about Mr. Clapp. Mr. Clapp, it must be understood, was

not of their kind: he didn't have to skulk. Henry was wounded and set his face grimly.

Mr. Silcox had found no peace of mind when, one morning, he sat with the young man on a bench beside the little lake overlooked by the hotel. It was Gresham Clapp's last day in the South; he planned to take the midnight express for Jacksonville and Chicago. They were talking in a desultory fashion about oranges.

"Would it be impertinent of me to ask how much you need, to put through your deal?" Paul Silcox inquired hesitatingly. "I—eh—might be able to find some one interested in the proposition, you know."

"Not a bit of it," replied his friend promptly. "I need, with what I've got, just ten thousand. Why don't you come in yourself, Mr. Silcox?" He laughed in a way that would make it easy to turn off the matter as a joke.

"I—I should be very glad to do so," faltered Mr. Silcox with great earnestness, "were it possible. As my affairs stand, it would be difficult to arrange, that's all."

"Oh, please don't think of it," the youth begged. "I wasn't asking you for the money. Business is one thing, and friendship's another. You've been awfully kind to me. I must tell you that before I leave."

"The pleasure has been mine, I assure you." Mr. Silcox's deprecation was sincerely felt. "But—look here, Mr. Clapp, I'm going to trust your discretion and tell you something. Do what you please with it. My name isn't Paul Silcox at all. I'm—I'm Peter Sanders. Yes," he went on, noticing his companion's involuntary start, "the notorious Peter Sanders. I don't suppose you could bear to have anything to do with such a rogue as the newspapers say I am, but I'd like to

lend you ten thousand with everything understood. I'd put it into your company gladly."

He finished his explanation rather wistfully and looked straight at the young man, who flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Why, Mr.—Silcox," said Gresham Clapp, pausing as if to deliberate on his words, "I don't know that it makes any difference who you are; I mean whether you are Mr. Silcox or Mr. Sanders. I see, of course, why you prefer not to use your own name here. Uncle Joseph would cut you dead if he knew you, or preach to you, which would be worse." He chuckled, despite his embarrassment.

"It's very good of you to say so, that is, to say it doesn't matter," returned Peter Sanders. "I appreciate it, and I know I can trust you."

"You can be sure that I'll never tell," said the young man, whose composure had returned. "But—excuse me—don't you find life here a bit dull?"

"I hadn't thought of it," answered his companion simply enough. "I—I find I like the people."

Gresham Clapp eyed him curiously. "It's queer," he said, "but I believe I understand it."

"If you do," queried Mr. Sanders, "won't you let me invest with you? Of course, I've never lived under a false name till I came here, and I should have to give you a draft on my bankers in New York."

"You're sure you want to do it?"

"Yes, quite sure," was the answer, "both for business and for personal reasons."

"I'd rather have you do it just for business," remarked his friend gravely.

"Well, it's strictly business, then," said Peter Sanders, smiling at last. "Will you come up to my room to arrange about it?"

Three-quarters of an hour later, Gresham Clapp left the hotel with the equivalent of ten thousand dollars in his pocket. He had said good-bye to Mr. Silcox, for it was agreed that convenience would be better served if they did not again meet in public. Peter Sanders sat alone, ruminating. His heart was full. His bitterness was turned, for the moment, into genuine satisfaction. No longer did he feel himself an outcast, wronged, oppressed, downtrodden by a smugly righteous world. He had made his way with an honest man. None of his investments had ever interested him like this, nor had he felt the same excitement over any venture. He virtually begged Henry's pardon when Henry next came to him, and he nearly moved the imperturbable servant to tears by his extraordinary kindness. All day long, he went about in this exalted state of mind.

Although his companions of the hotel were unaware of it, the real Peter Sanders had experienced a change of heart. His amiability towards them came no longer from mere good nature, and the craving for the society of beings who should take him at his own valuation. He cherished their respectability and his part in it for its own sake. He would have liked to make a clean confession of his sins before them all, and to be absolved at whatever cost of penitential suffering. Only a lurking sense that his transgressions against the code of these good people were too great to be forgiven without the sacrifice of esteem, withheld him from telling the whole story to Doctor Henderson at least. He chided himself as a moral coward, but he shivered at the possibility of receiving forgiveness mingled with condescension from a righteous man who had treated him as if he had no past. He recognized himself as a leper, but he shrank from crying: "Unclean, unclean!"

It would cut him off from what his heart craved, and it was quite unnecessary.

Whatever he had done (and perhaps the district attorney was right in thinking his establishment in New York a menace), he was doing no harm to any one now. He had even succeeded, once at least, in doing positive good. To be sure, he had in this case revealed his identity, but he could not be sure of finding elsewhere such philosophical acceptance of himself at his real worth. He recalled an admonition of his young friend's, just before they said good-bye, "Don't, for heaven's sake, let on to Uncle Joseph," and he was silent.

At the same time, the world took on a new aspect for Peter Sanders by reason of his encounter with honest Gresham Clapp, who was clean-souled without mounting the seat of judgment. He felt more assurance in his rôle of Paul Silcox, now that he had proved himself in the sight of another man to have the essential qualities of the part. He came to feel also, as the days passed, that he was not skulking but had buried his infamy forever. He enjoyed the sunlight as he had not done before; he relished a rubber of bridge after dinner with a fussy old lady in a white shawl as partner, and no stakes. The Roman satirists he neglected, and he read Montaigne with delight.

One morning, a week after Gresham Clapp's departure, he sat on the veranda with Doctor Henderson.

"I wonder that I have—ah—heard nothing from our friend Gresham," remarked the latter. "You have, I suppose, as yet had no word from him? He certainly should have sent you some acknowledgment of your kindness. For one of his years, he is so singularly thoughtful for others that I should have supposed—He is, indeed, greatly like his father."

"Oh, that's all right," returned Mr. Silcox easily.

"There's no reason why he should write me at once, and probably he'll send you a note soon. I should be very glad to hear."

"Ah!" exclaimed Doctor Henderson. "I see that the boy is bringing the morning post now. If you will allow me, I will see whether he has letters for us."

Two minutes later he returned, reading one letter and bearing another unopened.

"Our young friend has remembered us at the same time," he said with a smile. "He seems to be quite himself—quite, though he writes briefly."

"Thank you," said Mr. Silcox, taking the proffered letter, his face illumined with gratification. He tore it open and hurriedly glanced it through. "Yes, quite himself," he echoed without change of expression. "We will—talk about it later. Will you excuse me now? I have some things that must be attended to before lunch."

With nervous step he went to his sitting-room, wondering dully whether he could support himself all the way. He felt cold, as if death were upon him. Once in the room, he dropped heavily into a lounging-chair.

"Henry," he called to his attentive servant, "some whiskey! Pour it—please."

He gulped down the liquor with closed eyes.

"Go!" he said.

With an effort he opened the letter and spread it before him. Slowly and painfully, stabbed by every word, he read it.

DEAR MR. SANDERS:

It may interest you to know that our meeting in Orlando was not the first occasion on which I had the pleasure of your society. The winter before they closed you up, I visited your place in New York several times, and I dropped a straight ten thousand. I had to tell dad, and he has never forgiven me. He

swore I shouldn't go into the business or have a cent more than enough to live on till I'd earned that amount for myself. When I met you, I realized right away who you were, and I made up my mind I'd get it out of you. I played you, and I won. After you were so nice to me, I thought that I couldn't ask you for the money, but I sat tight. You offered it to me, you remember. Uncle Joseph, I suppose, would call the whole business a low trick. But you're a good sport and ought to admit that it was a fair game. After all, I haven't done you as badly as you did me. I'm sending you under another cover a transfer of the property in the Everglades, which may be worth something. I hope you'll like orange-raising! Tell Uncle Joseph if you want to, but I don't believe it would do you any good. I shan't tell dad.

Thanking you very sincerely for the good times you gave me *and* the ten thousand,

Yours truly,

GRESHAM CLAPP.

"Henry!" called Mr. Silcox huskily.

"Yes, sir—what is it, sir?" said Henry anxiously, appearing from the next room.

"Henry, I wanted to tell you—" Mr. Silcox gasped with the effort of speech. All the color had left his cheeks, and only his lifted eyelids gave expression to his face. "You were quite right about the gentleman—Mr. Clapp, you know. We *had* met before. It has cost me about ten thousand to find that out. He's like the whole rotten lot of them, and he's just about broken me—I mean my heart. You're the only man living who knows I have one, so I'd like you to know."

"I'm very sorry to hear it, Mr. Sanders," said the man, unrebuked. "I seldom do forget a face. I wish I could make it up to you, sir, I really do. Perhaps a little more whiskey before lunch, sir?"

Mr. Silcox made no answer, but sipped the glass that was placed at his elbow. For a long while he sat in deep thought.

CHAPTER V

DISTINCTIONS

IN WHICH MR. SANDERS LEARNS THAT A GOOD NAME IS ABOVE
RUBIES

It was a relief to Peter Sanders that Doctor Henderson left Orlando for his parish in the North only a day or two after Gresham Clapp's letters came to them. The clergyman was too much inclined to reminiscence of the immediate past to be, any longer, an agreeable companion. Mr. Sanders had been hard hit by the cold-blooded treachery of the youth, and he found it difficult to endure patiently Doctor Henderson's references to "our dear young friend." Yet, while he remained Mr. Silcox, he had to smile and give no sign that any one had discovered his real identity. Decidedly, he didn't wish to tell Uncle Joseph, but he was very glad that Uncle Joseph spared him a long continuance of his torturesome company.

The one thing that tided him over the difficult hours with Doctor Henderson was the necessity of keeping up, before the other guests at the hotel, his rôle of Mr. Silcox. He couldn't make his bow to that audience and retire into any sheltering wings—for there were no wings. He had either to run away without explanation, or to confess his deception before running away, or to keep on playing his chosen part. Each course was evil, but only the last seemed at all practicable. Therefore he waited for Doctor Henderson to leave, nursing his black thoughts the while.

The blow dealt him by Gresham Clapp had plunged

him back into the depths of cynicism from which he had been emerging. He had been shown, once more, that humanity was made up of heartless fools and brainless hypocrites; but he had been enlightened, besides, in a new way. He had been hurt where he had trusted: an interest that approached affection had been played upon to his undoing. The wound from which he suffered was different in kind from anything he had experienced before. Enemies he had always had; but he was unaccustomed to the betrayal of friends. He said to himself that he was cured, at length, of his weakness for mankind; he thought himself now the complete misanthrope.

The fact was that he was less misanthropic than he had been before his encounter with young Clapp. What he did not realize was that the armor of his self-sufficiency had been pierced. He was almost broken-hearted, not because he had been worsted by trickery, cleverly buncoed out of ten thousand dollars, but because his feelings had been trifled with, his friendship cast aside and spurned. On his side, at least, the human relationship he had formed was founded on genuine regard. He couldn't withdraw himself to his old position of cynical aloofness, or any longer watch quite unmoved the foolish scramble of young and old on their way to death.

The weeks in Florida had brought him, moreover, into close contact with other beings than Gresham Clapp. It was a circle with different habits of mind and different motives from any he had previously known. These men and women, though for the most part exceedingly dull, had a novel code according to which they lived: to over-reach or outwit another was not a proper thing to do. Mr. Sanders felt sure that most of them were thoroughly honest in a sense in which he

and his friends were not. Otherwise, he reflected, they would have been putting in these weeks at Palm Beach or Miami rather than Orlando. And these people, knowing him as Paul Silcox, had come to be on terms of something like friendship with him. They liked him, and evidently expected the acquaintance to ripen elsewhere and at other times.

There was Doctor Henderson, for example. The clergyman, when he went away (altogether to the relief of Peter Sanders), assured Mr. Silcox that he hoped to meet him before long in the North. If Mr. Silcox came to Boston, as he so easily might, he must come out to see him. He positively must. The situation bristled with future difficulties, but there was no use in denying that it was the result of present good feeling. It was also a little strange and exciting: Mr. Sanders had never before been invited to visit at a suburban rectory.

He couldn't guess, and less than ever after Gresham Clapp had shattered his dream did he try to guess, what would be the outcome of his experiment in respectability. When Doctor Henderson had gone, he stayed on in Orlando vegetatively, witnessing the approach of spring and quite passively waiting any stroke of fate that might come. It is the measure of the hurt he had received, that he clung to the tepid society of the hotel until it evaporated into its original elements. He was too inert to make any move, of his own volition, that would separate him from the decent nobodies who regarded him as one of themselves. Only when his acquaintances became insistent about their reservations on northbound expresses, and in their warnings not to get caught by the heat, did he begin to think of leaving. Even then he had not the courage to face the question of disappearing once and for all as Paul

Silcox, and so of getting out of the equivocal situation neatly.

It was not that these people to whom he clung were altogether perfect in his eyes. Far from that. They had faults of which Peter Sanders, in his wickedest days, would never have been guilty. For instance, they gossiped unblushingly. Even about worthy Doctor Henderson tongues wagged without much charity after he had gone. Pious ladies wondered why he had stayed on well into Lent, instead of getting home to his parish duties for that busy season of devotion. They had supposed he was getting strength for a series of sermons, or at least fortifying himself against the strain of early-morning services, and they sincerely hoped he hadn't left too great a responsibility on the shoulders of a presumably young and inexperienced curate. One good churchwoman of eighty-five, armed with a speaking-tube, catechised Mr. Silcox rather fiercely about his clerical friend's reasons for not going North before Ash Wednesday, and said she trusted Doctor Henderson wasn't having trouble with his wife. At all events, as everybody agreed, the example to the laity was bad. Peter Sanders was amused and more than a little shocked, but he did not change his estimate of the tattlers' worth.

Their faults, little and big, were patent to any one, and their inadequacies of intelligence were stamped on their faces; yet Mr. Silcox went through a series of farewells, as northbound trains began to fill, with keen regret. His sojourn in Arcady was about to end. He, too, must make some pretence of going about his business. He was driven to a decision, finally, by a sharp touch of heat in the early part of April. Two humid days sent off in frantic haste the sprinkling of guests who remained at the hotel, and Mr. Silcox told the

manager that he should be staying only till the end of the week.

"But what am I to do, Henry?" he inquired of his valet in dismay, shortly afterwards. "If we stayed on here any longer, I should be sent to some asylum and you would be deported, both of us as lunatics. Yet I don't know what to do. I'll have to fall back on your ingenuity again." He sighed.

"You couldn't go back to your house for the spring of the year, Mr. Silcox? Charles writes me—the man you left in charge, you remember, sir—that certain repairs need attention, and he doesn't like to arrange for them in your absence."

"Tell Charles to spend anything within reason and not bother me." Mr. Silcox frowned. "I can't live there under my present name, and I couldn't as Sanders. It's bad enough to have to foot the bills without being asked for advice besides."

"Very good, sir. I will communicate your orders. But it is true that you ought to be going North. Your health, sir!"

"What good is my health to me, I'd like to know?" Mr. Silcox was so annoyed as to be unreasonable. "I'd be much more useful buried, as a matter of fact, than I am now. I'm absolutely at sea, I tell you. I don't know where on earth to go."

Henry pondered. Very slowly and delicately he wiped the dust from the sill of a window that stood open towards the thirsty lawn. "I don't presume to advise you, Mr. Sanders—Mr. Silcox, sir, begging your pardon—and I don't know the region at all; but would it be possible for you to settle down for a time in New England? I've understood that they are great readers in those parts, and you might find gentlemen who would be agreeable companions—like Doctor Henderson, per-

haps. One may not enjoy their accent, but one gets used to strange ways of speaking after a time."

The suggestion seemed to Paul Silcox a good one. At least, he could think of no better solution of the problem. By travelling straight through to Boston, he might venture to remain incognito, and without another change of name find some secluded place of retirement for the spring and summer months. He didn't share Henry's expectation that he would find also the chance to associate freely with his own kind. New England, though originally inhabited by a chosen people, is now much invaded by New Yorkers and by other foreigners—Irishmen and settlers from the remoter parts of Europe. There was grave risk that Mr. Silcox's resemblance to a famous gambler, about whom the public had heard nothing for some months, might arouse comment; but that danger would be present anywhere, especially during the season when little else than baseball could be found to fill the newspapers. (It happened to be a non-political year.) All in all, New England would be as pleasant a region as any other for a temporary abiding-place—and no more perilous.

Thus it was that Mr. Silcox came to be registered at the Packer House not many days after the conversation just recorded. By keeping strictly to himself, and allowing Henry to transact all necessary business for him, he hoped to escape detection. He had never operated in Boston, after all, and couldn't remember that he had ever had many Bostonians as clients. It had been years since he had even visited the town.

For some days he found the spectacle of Boston sufficiently amusing of itself to keep him from boredom. The hotel was good, after a solid, unpretentious, provincial fashion of its own, and it was in character. Indeed, even a preliminary inspection revealed to Mr.

Silcox that Boston has a savor of its own. Its raw April winds he found distressing, and he failed to understand—not being a Bostonian—why the streets were never cleaned; but he took these things simply, as an outsider should. He had read not more than two copies of the *Evening Postscript* before he discovered that a considerable body of the peculiar people must still survive. Perhaps, having philosophized with Emerson, they preferred wet winds and filthy streets. At any rate, the jumble of narrow lanes through which they jostled about their business gave one an agreeable sense of being at the heart of something—an ant-hill, perhaps, inhabited by rather ugly ants, but nevertheless a busy ant-hill; and the avenues leading westward from the Public Gardens had a prim dignity of their own. Boston might flirt with notions from other places, but it remained true to its own traditions of starched and dusty gentility.

Within a short time, Mr. Silcox made sure that he had hit upon the best possible point of vantage from which to view without fatigue the whirling planet. It was the Hub, after all. For an idle solitary, nothing could be more satisfactory. The city, which ignored him, could without fear or scruple be ignored, and its citizens gave him opportunity for cynical observations that were, in their kind, exhilarating.

More than that, in the *Postscript* he found the perfect anodyne. Every afternoon, the lotus-flower of the Charles was brought in, neatly folded, quiet of hue, exhaling an odor different from that of other papers. To glean from it the news of the world was not a matter of swift glances and hasty turning of pages. The news was here, but it had been carefully shrouded from vulgar inquiry by a thick veil of words. There were, besides, many pages devoted to matters of timeless

interest, which gave dignity to the ephemeral record of daily events that seemed to be printed under protest. Research that was its own excuse for being came to fruition here: the work of local historians and genealogists and antiquaries drier. Here reformers pranced and prophets raved, while the activities of the humblest suburban women's club were not neglected.

All this took much space, and to review it several peaceful hours. Mr. Silcox often found that a section of the afternoon repast furnished forth not too coldly a mid-morning doze. The *Postscript* served even better than the *London Times* to make idle hours pass unobserved, for the latter had already begun to quicken its step to the rag-time of commercialism. Peter Sanders had long cultivated a distaste for the scurry of public events, and until his exile had for years read the newspapers but seldom: he had not wished to learn how many lives he was blasting. It was only when he made his great discovery in Boston, that he learned what a resource the daily press can be to a man who has time to throw away.

His reading was not without its practical uses, however, nor altogether a waste of time. Once a week exhaustively, and with more brevity on other evenings, New England advertised itself in the pages of the paper. A little coyly, not to seem coquettish or brazen, it exposed its beauties for sale or for hire. Hotels, inns, and even hostelrys put their best feet foremost, inviting custom, while cottages, camps, bungalows, residences, mansions, gentlemen's estates, and occasionally mere houses were offered to the market. All of them had elevations unless they were on the sea-coast, and together they raised a harmonious pæan to the honor of the Six States. The chorus was more than a little bewildering to an outsider who desired only an unobjec-

tionable summer retreat where he would be safe from molestation; but it was impressive.

Caught by the magic of these advertisements, Mr. Silcox bought a series of maps. For an intelligent study of his problem, he had to learn the relative situations of Kennebunk and Conway, Provincetown and Pride's Crossing. Soon he became an adept in the geography of the region, though his practical experience of it was very slight indeed. He had no desire, it must be confessed, to know it intimately: a fantastic investigation of its vacant properties sufficed him. He never put it to himself in that way, but there is no doubt that his frustrated instinct for gambling showed itself in the method by which he chose his country house. It was a long chance he was taking, and he took it boldly, but only after he had trained his intuition by an elaborate theoretical study of conditions.

That his luck, which in certain circles had been a proverb for many a long day, had not wholly deserted him was shown by the success of his plunge. When he left Boston, shortly before the first of June, he had the good fortune to be introduced at once to one of the loveliest sections of all New England, thereby escaping the hundred pitfalls digged by over-enthusiastic advertisers.

The difficulties that might have arisen in renting a house, because of his assumed name, he had circumvented by the simple expedient of asking Henry to sign the lease. He had instructed Henry to tell the agent that he was looking after a harmless elderly gentleman who was no longer permitted to attend to his own business. How literally these commands had been carried out he never knew; but Henry's name appeared on the lease as householder. It did not occur to either of them that the arrangement might lead to misunder-

standings and complications. Henry was bent only on giving his master the maximum of comfort at the minimum of inconvenience, and Peter Sanders, as always, regarded his own affairs as the concern of no one save himself.

The house that Henry had rented, to speak according to the legal state of the matter, stood on the crest of a rounded hill overlooking the river basin of the upper Connecticut. As Mr. Silcox approached the place, after having been jostled and begrimed during many hours on a train that must have been an heirloom of the railroad operating it, he thought himself lucky to have found so peaceful a spot. A red brick farmhouse of ample dignity—a type common to the district—had been enlarged by the absent owner into comfort, without destroying the serenity of its lines. Westward a wide terrace of rough-hewn flagstones invited one to stroll and watch the sinuous river, while roofed porches at either end of the main house furnished shelter against sun and rain. Four tall pines, like sentinels of the host that marched, in thick platoons, down the valley and across the higher hills to the east, lifted themselves within the white-paled enclosure.

"This," said Mr. Silcox to Henry, as he settled himself, well wrapped in rugs, on the south porch after dinner, "is distinctly novel. It promises well." A mountain of rough, triangular shape, off to the south, glowed in the evening light, and the darkening river, below its rampart of pines, still reflected the luminous blue of the sky.

"It isn't so bad as one might have expected, indeed, sir, when you think of the trouble in getting here. I feared you would be quite done up by the journey, and I wasn't at all sure whether the servants I sent on would do the necessary things."

"They seem to have the house in good order; but in any case I'm sure you'll put them right quickly enough. As for the train—I suppose the officials consider the journey a great adventure, and so send out the cars in long, hill-climbing caravans. But that doesn't matter, now we're here."

"No, Mr. Silcox. I only hope you'll be comfortable, sir."

"Oh, comfortable! I am always comfortable, Henry. The deuce of it is that I sometimes get bored, as you know to your cost. But this ought to be an Eden that would satisfy any hermit. There's space here, Henry—space."

"A little later, as I hope, sir, you will find other gentlemen of your own kind to talk with. One could entertain here very nicely in a small way." The man's tone was interrogative, but he clearly had visions of a social existence for his employer.

"Not of *my* own kind, I trust!" Peter Sanders smiled enigmatically and shook his head. He was dreaming of no conquests among the summer residents, whose houses might be scattered here and there over the hills or along the valley. He didn't make out, indeed, that they were numerous. Most of the places he had seen on the long drive from the station seemed to be still in the hands of working farmers, though farmers of an unusually prosperous type. He wondered a little what they were like, and whether they would receive him at his face value if he made the first advances. Anyhow, unless they were very different from the hayseeds popularized by the humorists of press and stage, they could hardly furnish him anything save occasional amusement.

For at least a fortnight, as things turned out, he lived in utter solitude, meeting no one. While sitting

out of doors, he often saw wagons toiling up the road that crazily mounted the hill and passed the house; and sometimes parties of country folk dressed for play rather than work drove down the road in strange vehicles known—he found by inquiry—as surreys and buggies. He noticed that these passers-by glanced curiously at him, but he was too far off from them to satisfy either his own interest or theirs. For the time being, indeed, he was well content to be sitting there within sight of the mountains and the river.

There was something about the quiet beauty of the landscape that satisfied and soothed, making him less desirous than usual of the human scene. Perhaps, it occurred to him, the fact that his ancestors had lived for generations among such hills as these made them more homelike to him than lovelier places where he could find no rest. He himself had been born elsewhere, but his father had come from a hill town of New England and had grown up, no doubt, to a familiar knowledge of this luminous sky. The hills to the northeast, outworks of the White Mountains, he was told, gave him a peculiar joy. Despite days of warm sunshine, the air was freshened by their influence, and the quietness of their outlines dominated him.

As a result of his surroundings—or at least he ascribed it to them—he took to reading Walter Scott. One day he opened a volume idly, wondering what had made him buy the set. To his surprise, he discovered that *Marmion* was an agreeable narrative. This led him to the novels, and forthwith he was embarked on the high seas of romance. It was almost a humiliation to find the books so enthralling. Peter Sanders, world-weary, disillusioned, misanthropic, should have been, of all men, least the victim of their spell. He could only explain it as the effect of solitude in a stimulating climate.

It was with considerable difficulty that Henry succeeded in getting his master off for the hour or two of motoring that he judged necessary to his health. The car was altogether an idea of Henry's. He had deprecatingly, but quite firmly, insisted that housekeeping in so remote a place would be impossible without it, and he was equally firm about its use on fine afternoons. Mr. Sanders sometimes rebelled, but Mr. Silcox succumbed. If only to preserve appearances, Henry argued, the motor must be run. What the appearances were he could not be got to say, but he had his will. Mr. Silcox was not ungrateful, though occasionally recalcitrant, for the expeditions broke the monotony of life on the hill, and perhaps increased his pleasure in Sir Walter when he got back to his reading. Moreover, he was made free of even more wide spaces than were visible from his terrace: open country that reminded him of English moors, and villages where good people dwelt simply along shaded streets in the sight of all the hills.

It was at least a fortnight, as I have said, before he talked with any one outside his own household. Then Henry announced, one morning, that a man wished to see him. Henry's attitude was one of non-committal disdain. Evidently he considered the visitor beneath Mr. Silcox's notice, but was prepared for strange adventures in a strange land. The caller, it seemed, was driving; would not get out of his vehicle; and demanded audience at the door.

Much amused, Mr. Silcox closed his book on a finger and went outside. On the dingy green cushions of a spindling runabout slouched the gaunt figure of a man clad in overalls and a coat so faded that its original color was hard to make out. His broad-brimmed straw hat and his horse were the only features of his equip-

ment not on the verge of decay. The horse he indicated by the twitch of a thumb, while he nodded curtly.

"Good-day. Hed the colt out, and didn't like to hitch her." This was said in answer to Mr. Silcox's salutation and in evident apology for his summons.

"Oh, no trouble at all," returned Mr. Silcox smoothly. "I haven't, I believe, had the pleasure, Mr.—Mr.——"

"My name's Corson." Mr. Corson closed his beardless lips as if he had uttered a challenge.

"Very good of you to stop in to see me, Mr. Corson." Mr. Silcox spoke mechanically, by no means sure what line to take with the stranger. "Are you a near neighbor of mine, may I ask?"

"You may. I live a piece up the road—not more'n half a mile. Thought I might see you at meetin', but you city folks seem to git on purty well without God, don't ye?"

Mr. Silcox smiled, for he detected a twinkle somewhere beneath the cold surface of the farmer's blue eyes. "I dare say we do. I'm not a church-goer myself, though I haven't anything against the practice. No doubt I ought to go to church. Certainly I have reason to know that one can't ignore God successfully."

"No more'n ye ken a snow-storm, 's I make out. But I'm no dominie, and I didn't stop here to preach to ye. Come kinder early, didn't ye?"

"I wouldn't have missed it," declared Mr. Silcox enthusiastically.

"H-m!" Mr. Corson's hard-bitten face gave no clue to his thoughts. "'Tain't so bad in June, but every March I make up my mind to sell out and go South. Kendall and his folks never come till just before the Fourth."

Mr. Silcox remembered that his Bostonian landlord's

name was Kendall, but he was perfectly uninterested in his summer habits. Therefore he said nothing.

"'Bout graduation time down at the college," went on Mr. Corson. "Kendall, he went to the college, and he generally likes to git here for the doin's. Was you eddicated there?"

"Unfortunately, I got my education in other ways," answered Mr. Silcox.

"Didn't do ye no harm, I guess. They learn some things down there they'd be better off without, and they don't learn too much of anything else. At least, that's what some folks say. What the truth is I dunno."

"You've lived here a long time, I suppose?" Mr. Silcox put the question merely from a polite wish to do his part in the conversation. He couldn't fathom Mr. Corson's reason for coming to see him, but he would sooner have stood on the steps the morning through than have appeared discourteous.

"Man and boy, goin' on sixty years. And I never see a better crop of grass than we're goin' to hev this year." He rubbed his pointed chin with his fist. "A good hay year," he went on meditatively. "Thet's what I come to see ye about."

"Not to get my opinion of the crop, I hope."

Mr. Corson cackled appreciatively, but checked himself and cried "Whoa!" to his restive mare, as if afraid of having done wrong in giving way to his merriment. "The grass goes with the place, don't it? I've cut it for Kendall ever sence he bought, but I callated you'd take the hay with the rest of the shebang. Mebbe I'm wrong."

Mr. Silcox was perplexed. "I'm afraid I'm not a practical farmer," he said. "It hadn't occurred to me that there would be grass to cut, and I hadn't thought about it. Possibly the hay is mine, but I don't know."

"Wal, you find out and think it over. 'Tain't wuth much, some of it—kinder run out—but then again the medders is purty good. Ye might 's well git what ye ken for it, and I'll give ye 's much 's anybody. See ye like readin'!"

Mr. Silcox started. He had been holding the volume of Scott while he talked, but he was unprepared for notice of the book by this lanky countryman. "Ah—yes," he said. "I was amusing myself with Sir Walter Scott when you came. Is he a favorite of yours?"

"Scott? Wal, I should say so. My father, he didn't believe in readin' novels, and I rec'lect how he whaled me when I got hold of *Ivanhoe*. Kinder drove in my taste for Scott, I guess. I've got a set com-plete up to the house. Good readin' in it, too."

Mr. Silcox's amazement grew. As Peter Sanders, he had developed a profound contempt not only for the morals but for the intelligence of the average man whom he met, and he had rated the man he did not meet as lower yet in the scale. His experiences in the rôle of Paul Silcox, though he had been edified by the journalistic extravagances of Boston, had not caused him to amend his views. That farmers ever read anything save *The Farmer's Almanack* and, possibly, an occasional government report on new processes in agriculture, had never occurred to him.

"Very good reading, indeed, so I find," he murmured. "It has been a long while since I've read Scott, and I'm really afraid I've never read this one before. It's *The Fortunes of Nigel*."

"You don't say!" A gleam of almost fanatical enthusiasm passed across Mr. Corson's eyes. Then he drew down the corners of his lips and said restrainedly: "Yes, I've read thet fifteen times ef I hev once. The evenin's git kinder long in winter. I set a good deal of store by Scott, though down to the village we've got

a lib'ry where I git books purty often. Hevn't been in the lib'ry, hev ye?"

"I haven't, as a matter of fact, though I've noticed the building."

"Given by Kendall here," explained the farmer quickly. "Some folks think he was a native, but he wa'n't. Come from up Colebrook way. Got consid'vably wealthy now, they say. Of course, our lib'ry ain't much alongside the one they've got down to the college. Been there, hain't ye?"

"Not as yet." Mr. Silcox felt that he had been neglecting his opportunities.

"Wal—better go some day. The graduation's wuth seein', though it can't compare with what 'twas when I was a boy. Now they go round in kinder black Mother Hubbards, and some of the professors hev fancy gew-gaws hangin' on their backs. Everybody used to turn out for it once; it wa'n't very different from a fair. They don't do so now."

"I must try to see it."

"I better try to find the way home, I guess." Mr. Corson cackled again at his own wit. "I'll call again about the hay. Good-day."

With a word to his horse he was off, leaving Mr. Silcox greatly puzzled. For one thing, he was quite unable to make out whether his visitor was friendly or hostile, which was annoying to a man accustomed to make instantaneous decisions about the purposes and attitudes of people whom he met, and for another thing, he couldn't place the fellow. If common farmers who spoke in broad dialect read and reread Scott as a matter of course, what, in heaven's name, became of intellectual distinctions? Confound Mr. Corson! His existence set a mad world gibbering even more than was its wont.

None the less, Mr. Silcox was rather glad to see him

when he drove up to the house, a few days later, to pursue his inquiries about the hay. Henry, meanwhile, had learned from the agent in Boston that he was entitled to any crop that the place might produce. Mr. Kendall, the owner, who was just sailing for Europe, had made the matter clear, adding that the proceeds had never been large.

"The grass is yours, Mr. Corson," Mr. Silcox explained, "and the price is entirely in your hands. If you chose to pay me ten times what it's worth, I shouldn't protest, for I haven't the slightest notion about the price of hay."

Mr. Corson grinned. "Guess you ain't so green 's you make out; but I wouldn't cheat ye. Your name's Silcox, ain't it?"

Mr. Silcox, standing as before on the edge of the porch, eyed him keenly. "Yes," he answered without hesitation.

"Thet's what I thought. Sarah Oldham was tryin' to persuade Mis' Corson yisterday thet 'twas somethin' else. 'T seems Mis' Kendall wrote her—when she sent her church subscription, I guess 'twas—sayin' they'd let the place for the summer to—I declare, I've lost the name now, but 'twa'n't yours."

"Possibly I can account for that," Mr. Silcox put in. "I sent my man to see the agent once or twice, and perhaps Mrs. Kendall got hold of his name instead of mine." The situation threatened awkwardness and had to be dealt with boldly.

"Mebbe so. Mis' Kendall ain't any too ac'rate, I've noticed. I s'pose you mean by your 'man' the feller who met me the other day, don't ye?"

"Yes; Henry told me you were here."

"Don't enjoy very good health, does he? I've seen him down to the village."

"Why! He always seems to be very well." Mr. Silcox was startled and a little alarmed, wondering whether he could have failed to notice some ailment of Henry's.

"Looked to me kinder peaked and pained," said Mr. Corson meditatively. "Funny, wa'n't it, gettin' him mixed up with you?"

Mr. Silcox smiled, and he breathed more freely, feeling sure that his new acquaintance would tell all the neighborhood of Mrs. Kendall's mistake. "Henry looks very solemn," he explained, "and he's not much accustomed to our ways. He's an Englishman, you see. However, I should find it hard to get along without him."

With a nod of comprehension Mr. Corson lifted his reins. "I guess I've read about his kind in stories," he remarked as he drove off, "but I never expected to see one. Good-day."

The deal in standing grass, though it seemed a trivial matter, had consequences of importance. By some means, which Mr. Silcox never at all understood, his association with Mr. Corson brought him to an easy acquaintance with a great many other men in the district. His encounters with them were casual. No one ever introduced himself, but each took the initiative in conversation with awkward bashfulness, quite as if it were a duty to ignore the newcomer's lack of local knowledge. Mr. Silcox, for his part, did his best to return their greetings cordially and to adapt himself to their point of view. He would not have been Peter Sanders, indeed, had he not found a way to be affable without condescension. He was amused by these people—at once so inquisitive and so reticent, so solemn and so humorous—and he took to going to the village on errands, that could have been done quite

as well by Henry or the chauffeur, merely for the pleasure of encountering some two or three of them.

Time had never hung less heavily on his hands since he had become a man of leisure. The countryside grew more beautiful daily, whether viewed from his own house or from his car, and his afternoon excursions grew longer and more varied. He found romantic landscapes revealed on many hills, and stretches of woodland that tempted one on and on with the pure joy of their restful quiet. Peter Sanders was no adept in fairy-lore, else he might have likened these pine-shadowed roads to the pathways of an enchanted forest—where road-beds are certainly quite as ill made as were some of these. Not being expert in such learning, however, he contented himself with quoting a verse of Lucretius that he thought applicable.

On one of his expeditions, he found himself unexpectedly in a village stretched along a plateau above the river. As his car swept alongside a great rectangle of lawn, bordered by elms and, back from them, buildings that were meant at least to strike the Georgian note, he realized that he had come upon the college of which his neighbor Corson had spoken. Some academic festival, it seemed, was being celebrated. There were throngs of flannelled students on the green, and along the elm-shaded walks a good many women and girls in summer dresses. The centre of interest was a double line of black-gowned figures intent on some ritual that included marching. He stopped the car; he would observe. "No," he was told when he asked a passing youth, "it isn't Commencement; it's the Wet-Down." The explanation was inadequate, but it kept him from further inquiry. Obviously, he concluded, even a stranger ought to know the meaning of the rite. If he did not, he had better keep silence

and save himself from ridicule. Besides, the scene was pretty enough of itself to merit watching. There would be no point in searching too curiously for its precise significance.

A little enviously, Peter Sanders let his eyes rove over the crowd of young men. He had never seen an American college town before, and he had a great respect for learning. What would his life have been like, he wondered, if he had had the opportunities in youth that these boys were enjoying? He was seeing them now at some kind of solemn play, but he could picture them, he thought, in working hours. Lucky youngsters! They would be reading their Greek and Latin authors with the full zest of youth and under the most competent guidance. They would be exploring mysterious sciences of which he knew nothing, or eagerly learning what man had done in earlier ages. In the years round twenty he had been, himself, occupied very differently; he had learned, about that time, that there were easier ways to make a living than by steady work behind a counter; he had been precociously and painfully acquiring the rudiments of the art by which he had later won some wealth and intolerable infamy.

As he looked at these boys, he hoped that none among them was neglecting the chance to become at once a scholar and a gentleman. Yet he couldn't suppose that the hope was universally justified by the facts. He remembered the silly collegians who used to come to his house sometimes to squander money, and with great bitterness he remembered Gresham Clapp—who had had every opportunity, and had learned only how to get the better of a persecuted old gambler. The sudden recollection chilled his pleasure in watching the scene. Curtly he bade the chauffeur drive on: he could no

longer bear the sight of youth. Even the beauty of the afternoon was obscured for him as he sped back to his solitary hilltop, for he could not be sure that many of the boys he had seen were not heartless knaves like Gresham Clapp. Why not? Men who had the chance always played the fool or lived upon the folly of others, and these students were in training for the world that he knew.

In spite of his disenchantment, however, Mr. Silcox found himself returning, on other days, to the college town. It was a convenient objective for an afternoon's drive, and it was undeniably a beautiful place. Mr. Corson, who assumed a proprietary interest in both Mr. Silcox and the countryside, was greatly pleased when he heard of these visits.

"I'd go myself ef weeds wouldn't grow so dreadful quick," he averred. "I always did think the college was sightly."

Yet no persuasion was sufficient to make him take an afternoon off and go motoring with his friend, though he frequently found time to stop for an hour's desultory conversation in the course of a morning.

"The colt's fast enough for me," was his excuse for not accepting the repeated invitation. "Besides, by rights I ought t' be cultivatin' my three-acre piece this minute."

So Mr. Silcox continued to visit the college alone. He discovered that the pleasant green was called the campus, a name that delighted him with its fine Roman flavor. The buildings set round about it were backed by others, scattered up hill and down dale without apparent plan, shouldering aside the houses of the village in one direction and blocked by a wild park in another. A playing-field that stretched just beyond a monstrous gymnasium attracted his attention and

excited his interest. He had followed the races in his time, but was unfamiliar with the magnificence of the scholarly amateur in sport. By inquiry he even found the modest college library, and he was puzzled, when he entered it, to learn that it was not more richly endowed. The neat card catalogue revealed the lack of many useful and interesting books that he himself owned. The profound studies that were here pursued must be seriously hindered, he thought, by the want of books. It was strange, and a little saddening. Thus did he become acquainted, though but superficially, with the conduct of higher education.

One afternoon, when June was drawing towards an end, Mr. Silcox noticed that the streets of the little town were unusually animated. "No doubt this is what my friend Corson calls the 'graduation,'" he thought to himself. With the intention of seeing what he could of the affair, he left his motor-car and strolled in a leisurely fashion about the college grounds. This was not, he soon made out, a day of solemn festival. There were visible, to be sure, young men in black gowns; but the higher lights in the picture were made by the gay dresses of a host of young women. That note dominated everything. An odd feature of the shifting throng was the presence of a great many youths garbed, apparently, for some frolic in fancy dress. Indians and cowboys and sailors mixed freely with ladies and gentlemen in more conventional clothing. Not being aware that Commencement in our American colleges has become a more or less innocent Saturnalia, Mr. Silcox was bewildered. He was far from suspecting that these masqueraders were graduates of the institution, and could only suppose them to be students anticipating some entertainment of the evening. He smiled a little at a simplicity of manners that per-

mitted them to appear so grotesquely clad in broad daylight.

Absorbed by the curious and undeniably pretty spectacle, Mr. Silcox did not notice at once when his name was called by some one behind him. He became aware of it only when a passing youth touched his arm courteously.

"What? Oh! Thank you." He had turned and had seen Doctor Henderson—none other—coming towards him with outstretched hand.

"This is—ah—an unexpected pleasure," said the clergyman. "I had feared that you might not be coming to New England this summer, Mr. Silcox, despite our—our urgent recommendations to you. I am gratified, indeed, to see you—greatly gratified."

"Thanks very much. It's a pleasure to see you, doctor, I assure you." Mr. Silcox was not wholly comfortable about the encounter, but he was genuinely glad to see Doctor Henderson again. The sight of a familiar face beaming at him cordially was very cheerful. Somehow he almost forgot that he was Peter Sanders, now that he was greeted as an established friend by a heavily respectable parson. He felt remote from his execrated past, quite as if it had been the life of another person, whom he had known, indeed, but for whom he was not responsible.

"I wish to have you meet," Doctor Henderson's voice was saying, "my very dear friend—eh—Mr. Clapp—Mr. Jonas Clapp, Mr. Silcox."

Then, and then only, Mr. Silcox noticed the heavy person at Doctor Henderson's elbow: a man of his dear friend's own age but of a strikingly different physical type. Carefully modulated good living had made the clergyman lean and had given him the surface of polished asceticism. Mr. Clapp's surface had been

polished, but by a less delicate process. His face looked at once plump and hard—as if made of some superior substitute for flesh—and his clothes were almost painfully neat. Success irradiated his being: success so unimpeachable that it penetrated the surrounding atmosphere. Unfortunately it did not keep Mr. Clapp from looking slightly pompous.

“Glad to meet you, Mr. Silcox,” said Mr. Clapp, grasping Mr. Silcox’s hand with an impersonal warmth that made him shudder inwardly. He was reminded of the younger Clapp’s hand-clasp, and he had a swift vision of the son at the age of the father.

“How do you do, sir?” Mr. Silcox murmured abstractedly.

“You will remember, Jonas”—Doctor Henderson fluttered into speech nervously—“that I told you of Mr. Silcox’s great kindness to Gresham and me in Florida. Gresham has—ah—no doubt spoken of him also.”

“Yes, yes, indeed. Very good of you to look after them as you did.” It was clear that Mr. Clapp had no recollection whatever of hearing about Mr. Silcox, and was attempting to disguise the fact by ponderous geniality.

Mr. Silcox was uncomfortable. Although he knew that the impression must be due to hazy memories of published portraits and to a clear likeness between son and father, he had the annoying sense of having met the great financier before. Besides, he disliked the way the man looked at him. After all, Jonas Clapp was as keen in his way as ever Peter Sanders had been in his, and he might discover things that Doctor Henderson would never suspect. Mr. Silcox braced himself for an unpleasant quarter-hour. He couldn’t get away, and he must stand the risk of being found out. With

nerves steadied to the encounter, he watched Mr. Clapp from beneath lazily drooping eyelids.

"But—ah—Mr. Silcox, I haven't asked you," went on Doctor Henderson, "whether you are staying here through Commencement or are only a bird—eh—of passage."

Mr. Silcox smiled gently. "I've taken a house for the summer, a few miles up the river, and I sometimes motor down of an afternoon. It was the merest chance that I came to-day, in point of fact. I hadn't known that these festivities were going on, you see. I'm absolutely an outsider; but I'm glad to have met you, doctor. A pretty scene, isn't it?"

"One of the beauty spots of God's green earth," said Mr. Clapp startingly.

"Jonas—eh—Mr. Clapp is one of the trustees of the college," explained the clergyman hurriedly, almost as if in excuse for Mr. Clapp's outburst of enthusiasm. "We were classmates here, as I may have told you, and he—eh—very kindly asked me to come up with him for the Commencement exercises."

The three gentlemen moved slowly apart from the crowd up a shaded street, talking meanwhile most amicably about the college. Doctor Henderson was voluble in explanation, while his friend spoke from time to time authoritatively. His tone, it occurred to Mr. Silcox, who remained keenly alert to the possibilities of the situation for himself, was somehow proprietary.

"Are you a college man, Mr. Silcox?" asked Mr. Clapp graciously.

"Unfortunately not. I had to go to work—which I've come to regret, especially of late years."

"I believe in college training, myself," Mr. Clapp asserted. "I've always encouraged young men to go to college, and I think I can fairly say that I've done

my share about helping them. I was one of the first men in the country, I believe, to argue that a college education needn't ruin a boy for business—not if it was properly arranged.”

“Quite wonderful how your idea has established itself—quite—ah—wonderful,” Doctor Henderson put in. “Do I understand correctly, Jonas, that a considerable majority of our graduates now go into business?”

“Such is now the case.” Mr. Clapp beamed with satisfaction at his part in educational reform. “You fellows in the professions, Joe, will have to look sharp if you’re going to get any of them much longer. Very different from our time! Why, I studied law myself, Mr. Silcox. Everybody thought he had to do something of the sort in those days.”

“What you tell me is very interesting,” said Mr. Silcox seriously. “Of course I knew that more college graduates went into business than formerly, but I hadn’t realized that the proportion was so large. No doubt it’s a very good thing. The country will certainly be better off for having men in charge of affairs who know books.”

“It isn’t so much what they get out of books that makes college useful to them.” Mr. Clapp’s haste to explain took from him some of his swollen dignity. “As a matter of fact, the boys don’t waste much time on the classics and the kind of thing we studied in our day. Of course we give them all the broad cultural studies for a year or so, but we encourage them to take up subjects that will be really valuable to them.”

“Oh!” At the moment Mr. Silcox’s astonishment permitted only the monosyllable. He was indignant, and he wondered how he could best defend from these slurs the opportunities he would like to have had. Then

he remembered that he was only an uneducated outsider—Peter Sanders, for that matter, disgraced and dethroned. He hadn't any business to raise his voice in defence of learning, but he was grateful to hear Doctor Henderson challenging his friend.

"I can't believe you mean to say, Jonas, that Greek and Latin are not a valuable—ah—discipline. Even though we may not read them—may perhaps have forgotten——"

"Of course they are valuable, Joe," broke in Mr. Clapp. "Don't misunderstand me. I support the classics as strongly as anybody—always have. But times have changed, and other things that will be useful later on have been found just as good discipline as the old studies. The professors teach the young fellows a lot of things that aren't so, of course, but they learn better later. They're better off for a course in money and banking, for instance: likely to be sounder and more conservative, you know."

"Mr. Silcox is—ah—a banker," explained Doctor Henderson.

"You can see how it would work out, then." Jonas Clapp, though he startled Mr. Silcox by one keen, appraising glance, was too intent on making his point to think of anything else. "As I was saying, it isn't so much what they get out of books, anyhow, that makes college worth while to them; it's learning to get on with other men. Why, a college is a world in itself nowadays!"

"I see. Fencing with the buttons on as contrasted with duelling, I suppose." Mr. Silcox spoke quietly. One of the few illusions left to him had been shattered, but the loss of illusions was no novelty. He had heard all he cared to hear about education.

"That's just about it." Mr. Clapp took him up

quickly. "And the best of them come out pretty well prepared for life as it is, I can tell you. Why, my boy—" He broke off, chuckling.

"Gresham did not, I fear, make the most of his—eh—opportunities." Doctor Henderson spoke regretfully.

"I used to think so," went on Mr. Clapp. "I wasn't exactly pleased when he had to leave college without finishing his course. And he made a fool of himself in several ways. Perhaps he will again, for anything I know, but he's making good now."

"That must be a great satisfaction to you," said Mr. Silcox. It seemed to be the least he could say, and some comment he felt bound to make.

"Yes; is it not delightful to hear—really delightful?" Doctor Henderson's high-keyed voice trembled a little. His feeling for young Gresham could never be called in question.

"I guess I forgot to tell you, Joe," said Mr. Clapp with elaborate nonchalance, continuing to chuckle.

"Do tell us about it!" Doctor Henderson exclaimed. "Mr. Silcox will, I'm sure, be quite as gratified as I to hear of his success. They came to be such good friends in Florida!"

Mr. Silcox found it difficult to control his feelings, but he said only: "Indeed, yes, your son honored me greatly—a man of my age is flattered when a young fellow takes to him, you know."

"Well, he can be ingratiating enough when he tries," began Mr. Clapp, sobering. "To make a long story short, Mr. Silcox, the boy lost a good lot of money some years ago at a disreputable and notorious gambling-hell in New York. That's the plain truth of the matter, without varnishing. I didn't mind the loss of the money so much, but I was pretty well cut up about it. I don't know what I mightn't have done if it hadn't been for

this fellow here." He placed a hand affectionately on Doctor Henderson's shoulder.

"Oh, you—eh—exaggerate, Jonas. I did nothing except plead with you not to be too hard on the lad, remembering the time when you——"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Mr. Clapp, flushing slightly. "You kept me from making a fool of myself this time, anyhow. We shipped the boy off to the West, and I told him he couldn't come into the business till he'd paid me back the ten thousand he'd lost."

Mr. Silcox was silent, his mouth set and his eyelids drooping lazily. No one could have realized the tumult of his mind. He did not need to listen to this story; he knew it to his cost.

"I think you'll agree with me, Mr. Silcox, that it was the best thing I could have done," went on Mr. Clapp. "It turned out well, too: it made a man of him. Last winter I gave him some worthless land in Florida to look over, just to see what he'd do with it, and I told him he could have anything he made. Do you know, he brought me a cheque for ten thousand, this spring, and told me he'd made it on a deal in that land. What do you think of that?"

"Excellent—excellent," murmured the clergyman. "Only you are mistaken in one particular, Jonas. Gresham talked to us a great deal at Orlando about the Everglades. He was—eh—very enthusiastic—very enthusiastic, having found great possibilities for business—ah—enterprise in that region. I have been thinking ever since that I had, perhaps, better invest in land there. I had it in mind to consult you, Jonas."

"You'd better stay out," said Mr. Clapp genially. "You'd get your feet wet, I'm afraid. Don't you think so, Mr. Silcox?"

"I should certainly advise against any such invest-

ment," answered Mr. Silcox, so dryly that the great financier wondered in passing whether he was speaking merely with a banker's habitual caution, or with some particular experience in mind.

"Anyhow, the land I had wasn't worth a Hannah Cook," persisted Mr. Clapp. "That's what pleased me when the boy told me he'd unloaded. I gave him his chance right away. But what I didn't know till the other day was this. It came out quite accidentally. Whom do you suppose he sold that land to?"

"But surely, Jonas, you couldn't approve of his selling to any one if the land was so—eh—valueless as you represent." Doctor Henderson looked grieved.

"A straight business deal, Joe," Mr. Clapp asserted. "I took it on a flier, and I found it didn't do me any good. Perhaps the man who bought it thinks it's a little Eden. He has spent his life in taking chances, I understand." Again he chuckled. "That's the funny part of it, really. Gresham got rid of the land to the miserable scalawag who robbed him of my money two years ago—Peter Sanders, if you please."

"Why!" exclaimed Doctor Henderson.

"What do you think of that, Mr. Silcox?" Mr. Clapp turned to the veritable Peter Sanders.

"Very sharp; very sharp, indeed," Mr. Silcox was able to bring out. "The biter was bit, I take it."

"Precisely." Mr. Clapp beamed more genially than ever. "I don't know yet how my boy managed it. Did either of you gentlemen happen to hear that Sanders was in Florida when you were there?"

"I feel sure he was not in Orlando," said Doctor Henderson severely. "A very respectable community—very respectable."

"Not at all the kind of place so disreputable a person as Sanders would frequent," Mr. Silcox added.

"Well, I don't know, as I say, how my son got hold of him. But that doesn't matter. Gresham swore that he hadn't gambled, and I'm willing to take his word for it. I'll trust him pretty far now, I'll tell you."

"Oh, decidedly. After meeting him, I should never feel any doubt of his being able to look out for himself." Mr. Silcox was beginning to feel ill with the strain of playing up, and he wished above everything to return to his car. What he had suffered at Orlando came back to him overwhelmingly while he listened to the father's exultation in the young man's knavery. He must end this at once.

"I do hope Gresham hasn't been—eh—frequenting bad company," said Doctor Henderson anxiously.

"Don't you worry, Joe," the father reassured him. "But I ought to apologize to you, Mr. Silcox, for taking your time like this. A man doesn't know when to stop talking about his business or his boy. You must have noticed that before."

"Please don't apologize," said Mr. Silcox suavely. "I have been greatly interested, believe me. But now I'm afraid I must be getting on. I wish I might have the privilege of seeing you again before you go away. If you have time, I should like to send down my car to fetch either or both of you. The view from my hill-top is quite lovely."

"Nothing I'd like to do better." Mr. Clapp spoke regretfully. "I only wish we had time; but what with meetings and festivities, I don't believe we can manage it. Very good of you." Quite evidently he had appraised Mr. Silcox, and found him the solid citizen that he wished to seem—a man with whom further acquaintance would be desirable.

"Quite so, quite so," said Doctor Henderson with nervous haste. "It has been the greatest—eh—pleasure

to see you again, Mr. Silcox. You must certainly pay me a visit as you pass through Boston at the end of the summer."

Making what excuses and what promises he could, Mr. Silcox escaped to his motor-car. He was a little white as he sank back on the cushions—and very shaken.

"Drive home slowly," he said to the chauffeur.

Later, as he watched the sunset from his porch, he muttered to himself, blinking solemnly: "All very well for Paul Silcox. Seems to have his roots in now. But as for Peter Sanders—! And a sharper like that Clapp approves of me—just because I'm Paul Silcox. Well?"

CHAPTER VI

DISCOVERY

IN WHICH HIDDEN THINGS ARE REVEALED AND CROOKED PLACES
MADE STRAIGHT

FOR some weeks after his encounter with Doctor Henderson and Jonas Clapp, Mr. Silcox remained undisturbed in his retreat. Midsummer came, and with it high temperatures that were mitigated only by the proximity of the mountains. Almost every afternoon their cool influence could be felt, battling with the scorching heat that drove up the valley and, after sundown, overcoming it. Having nothing to do except enjoy the loveliness of the mornings and evenings, Mr. Silcox was overwhelmed by the hot weather, though he took humorous satisfaction in remembering that Peter Sanders had frequently stayed through a summer in New York without suffering.

"Do you realize," he said to Henry, one July day when the temperature had risen unwontedly, "that a man never does anything unless he is bluffed into it? He is sometimes uselessly active of his own volition, but he never does anything worth while unless he has to."

"Yes, sir. I mean, Mr. Silcox, shall I get you something cool to drink, sir?"

"Oh, you are the exception to all rules, Henry, and I need nothing whatever at the moment. I don't mean to imply, either, that I should be doing anything useful, in any case. I was merely recalling that I once made a hundred thousand during a hot wave in town. The

thermometer must have stood at something like ninety that week. Lewisohn was going to break me, you know—but that was before your time.”

“Yes, sir. I should have remembered it if I’d been about.”

“Oh, well! I’m a fool to be harking back to those days, but I’m also a fool to be finding the heat oppressive in a place like this. Don’t you think so, speaking candidly for once, Henry?”

“It’s very hard to tell how another person feels, sir, isn’t it?” Henry stood, looking particularly grim, beside the luncheon-table.

“Very! I’ve never yet, for example, been able to make out how you feel about anything whatsoever. That is, I’ve never got you to express your likes and dislikes in speech—sometimes I’ve known.”

Without replying, but with the utmost deference, Henry removed a platter and left the room. He had ways of avoiding discussion that Mr. Silcox sometimes envied him.

As the summer wore on and August came, it grew evident that Henry considered their sojourn in the hills not wholly a success. Mr. Silcox, though he complained of the man’s reticence, had learned to read the signs of his approval or disapproval without much trouble, and he took an idler’s delight in puzzling out his unexpressed moods. In this particular case, he had no difficulty in understanding that Henry was disappointed because the summer was providing so little society for his employer. Visions of a sedate circle, bookishly inclined, which should decorously gather about a table set by Henry’s own hand, had come to nothing. Mr. Silcox, who had flattered himself by no expectations of this sort, was not dissatisfied. He was more nearly content with solitude than he had ever

been before. The climate was delicious, now that the heat had begun to be tempered by hints of an autumn to follow, and ripening crops in the landscape gave to the onlooker a sense of quiet. Mr. Silcox realized that he had grown sluggish, for any kind of mental effort brought weariness; but he did not care. He took his ease in his inertia and regretted only Henry's evident dissatisfaction.

It was not, after all, that they had had no visitors. The minister of the parish had called during July: a frayed-out little man whom Mr. Silcox pitied so much that he sent him a generous sum shortly afterwards, salving his conscience by demanding that the donation be considered personal and secret. He pitied the minister no less after a second interview; but he found the thanks with which he was deluged quite unsupportable, particularly as the parson conveyed them in ungrammatical language. What had become, Mr. Silcox wondered, of the old-fashioned country minister who was reputed to have been a cultured if not a learned gentleman? This one had fewer intellectual interests than novel-reading Mr. Corson.

Meanwhile, his acquaintance with other neighbors than Mr. Corson had ripened. Before the latter end of August, he had gleaned, by tactful questioning and kindly observation, a tolerably accurate knowledge of most of the families who lived within a couple of miles of his house, and he had made friends with many of them. Several of the men had fallen into the habit of stopping for a chat when they drove past, though no one had grown so familiar as Mr. Corson. Even he, though he had so far overcome his first awe of Henry that he now chaffed him freely out of Mr. Silcox's hearing, could never be inveigled into the house. The south porch, within easy reach of the driveway, was the ut-

most point to which he ventured. The other visitors seldom went so far as this. They preferred to sit in their mud-splashed wagons, while Mr. Silcox stood on the steps or talked to them over the veranda railing.

Had he but known, the easy and familiar tone they took with him was a delicate compliment to his personal qualities. That they were able to overcome their shyness and pride, to the extent of discussing national affairs and exchanging local gossip with a man who had come to the town an absolute stranger at the beginning of summer, especially a man belonging to the tribe of "city folks," showed how completely he had won their confidence. The faintest suspicion that he was condescending to them would have been fatal; but, indeed, he was not condescending. Peter Sanders had learned, early in his career, that it was never safe to look down on another man when you wished to make him trust you. Contempt was safe, but condescension was more than dangerous—it was impossible. He had used the knowledge profitably, and he bequeathed it to Mr. Silcox.

Mr. Silcox, of course, had nothing to gain from his neighbors save casual entertainment and some quite useless information about local affairs. Yet he cherished the acquaintances he was making. It is to be supposed that his wounded pride was a little touched by their acceptance of him. To himself, he gave only the inadequate explanation that he liked them, which was, indeed, true as far as it went. These northern farmers were no mere clodhoppers: they had ideas of a sort; they read as much as most men read; and they had a store of traditional wisdom, which they expressed in subtly ironic and humorous speech. Their dry style was a perpetual delight. It was in key with life as Paul Silcox understood life.

Before the summer drew to an end, he began to wonder how he could show, without offence, his appreciation of the real kindness with which these people had treated him. He had rented his house only till the first of October, and he knew that he could never return, once he went away. His situation was precarious, to say the least of it. He was bothered, as he wouldn't have expected to be, by the fact that he was living under a false name. He was no longer afraid of discovery, as far as Mr. Corson and his other acquaintances were concerned, but he was very sure that they would like him less if they knew the truth. That being so, he would never come back to them, even if a return were otherwise possible. He felt, even more than he had felt it in Florida, the strength of community spirit. This community he respected, and he would dislike shocking it. The false position he occupied became abhorrent to him. All he asked was the opportunity to give his friends here some token of remembrance before he shut the door on the whole episode.

The difficulty lay in finding what to do and how to do it. Any considerable gift to the public, by which they might benefit, was out of the question. Peter Sanders could neither send a cheque in behalf of Paul Silcox nor get Henry to do so. Donations to individuals, again, were impossible: the terms on which he stood with them, though friendly, weren't sufficiently intimate to permit him to distribute presents of even trifling value. Besides, he would have no notion at all about what to give. A set of harness for Mr. Corson's colt, perhaps? The beast went shabbily equipped in rusty leather. But probably there was fresh harness in some stable closet, ready for use on the proper occasion. Mr. Silcox had been learning that these New Englanders usually put their best foot obscurely hindmost.

If not by gifts, what practicable way could be found? Henry, who was consulted, had no suggestion to make that was worth while. He could never wholly master the idea that these farmers considered themselves quite the equals of Mr. Silcox; and he could think of no relationship with them except on the basis of a modified feudalism. He proposed, for example, a "treat," and described a form of entertainment suited only to the tenantry on an English estate half a century ago. He was puzzled, and even a little offended, when Mr. Silcox laughed at the notion.

"I think I'll have to consult Corson," said Mr. Silcox at length.

"Quite proper, sir," Henry answered. "Mr. Corson will be sure to know what men of his class like best. I don't make them out, Mr. Silcox, I admit. They're different to anything I ever saw before, as you say, sir."

Accordingly, when Mr. Corson next drove up to the house, Mr. Silcox insisted that he alight and come up on the porch for a talk. He was accompanied, as it happened, by one of his many cousins, Jabez Fletcher, who owned the farm adjoining his own. This was in mid-September, of an afternoon when golden sunlight bathed the soft hills and the valley. Over the forests there were great splashes of vivid color—crimson and tawny brown and scarlet—while the shadows that lay upon the folds of the earth were even more richly violet than they had been at midsummer.

"Gettin' on towards fall," Mr. Fletcher remarked, as he sat down awkwardly.

"Yes, I'm sorry to say it is." This was Mr. Silcox's cue. "I've been thinking about it a good deal, for I shall be leaving in a fortnight, now."

"Guess I'll hev to be drivin' into somebody else's

dooryard, won't I?" Mr. Corson cackled mildly, feeling a little embarrassed. His speech was an approach to sentiment uncommon with him.

"I shall miss your visits," Mr. Silcox replied, quite seriously. "I've been wishing, as a matter of fact, to ask your advice about this very matter. I wish you would tell me what I can do to show my appreciation of you—let's put it, of the good time I've had here."

"Oh, that's all right, I'm sure." Mr. Fletcher stiffened perceptibly throughout his gaunt length. He was taller than his cousin, but of the same spare build, and he slouched in an even more loose-jointed way. Apparently he scented danger in Mr. Silcox's suggestion, and was prepared to resent it.

Mr. Corson was undisturbed, and grinned cheerfully. "Ye might give Jabez here a hair-cut before ye go away. He'll need one before spring."

Mr. Fletcher clawed his thin beard and gulped violently, trying to think of a suitable retort. He had never grown so familiar with Mr. Silcox as had Moses Corson.

"Ye might buy him a shave, too," went on the latter. "I can't think of anything the town needs worse to make it a sightly place." Mr. Corson stroked his own beardless chin.

"He might buy you a muzzle," retorted Mr. Fletcher, finding his voice. "If I was you, I'd want to grow a beard, Mose. It'd do a little towards hidin' your face, anyhow."

"But I'm talking business," put in Mr. Silcox. "The fact is, I can't think of anything, really, that the town needs—unless it's better roads. And I should like to leave a little something behind me when I go away."

"You mean you really want to give something to the place? Is that it?" Mr. Corson had grown serious.

"I should like to, in a modest way—just that."

"We've got a lib'ry." Mr. Fletcher waggled his head dubiously.

"Yes, and we've got a hearse and a graveyard, for that matter." Mr. Corson's voice was sharp, but his blue eyes twinkled. "Mr. Silcox may not want to fence in the county for us, you know. Mebbe he does, but he hain't said so."

Mr. Silcox smiled amiably. "I'm afraid anything so ambitious would be beyond me. I shouldn't like to keep people away from this region, anyhow. I'd rather do something to advertise it. I don't mind saying that I feel a real affection for it."

"It ain't so bad in summer," admitted Mr. Corson grudgingly. "I guess I've said that before. But I dunno 's I'd like to hev it advertised. It might get like what it is down below—Cornish Flats way. They've got what they call a colony there, and they've et up the kentry. They run every 'tarnal thing to suit themselves."

"But they've made a great many improvements," objected Mr. Silcox.

"So they hev, so they hev," Mr. Corson said with a shrug of his meagre shoulders.

"That ain't the trouble." Mr. Fletcher spoke firmly. "A man wants to hev some say in his own town, that's all. It's all right to hev Kendall fix up this place. But if twenty farms was to be bought up round here, where'd we be? We wouldn't be no better'n hired men."

"And we'd be treated that way," added Mr. Corson. "You see, Mr. Silcox, most city folks ain't like you. They kinder look down on us. I dunno 's I blame 'em. Farmers in the books I've read usually behave like monkeys, or as if they was a little wantin', and the city folks get their information that way mostly, I guess."

"There's one of 'em now, I'll bet a nickel." Mr. Fletcher's tone expressed supreme disgust.

A huge automobile was running rapidly down the road, raising a cloud of dust. Its pace slackened as it approached the gate; but it was whirring smoothly up the driveway before the group on the veranda quite realized that it might stop.

"Guess we'd better clear out, Mose," said Mr. Fletcher.

"Sit still," Mr. Silcox entreated. "Probably they only wish to ask their way. There's nobody I know in these parts—nobody with a motor-car like that."

He had scarcely said the words when the car stopped. Mr. Corson and Mr. Fletcher had no chance to escape; but they rose, as Mr. Silcox rose, to meet the newcomers. There were two middle-aged gentlemen on the rear seat of the automobile, and a rather smart chauffeur in front. One of the men stood up: a solidly built person of about forty-five, regular of feature, almost swarthy of complexion. His black eyes were small and set so wide apart that they gave the impression of two bright lights gleaming in the dark.

"Excuse me," he began rapidly, as if delivering a speech prepared beforehand. "We have unfortunately let our gasolene run low. I wonder if you could let us have a gallon. We were informed, above here, that you own a car. It would be extraordinarily kind of you——"

He had gone thus far when he suddenly broke off. He looked back and forth from Mr. Silcox to his two companions on the veranda, apparently astonished at something and unable to go on with his set speech.

"I think we can supply you." Mr. Silcox could see no reason for the man's embarrassment. If he was struck speechless by seeing two farmers in their work-

ing clothes on a civilized porch, it was time he experienced the shock. "If my friends will excuse me for a moment, I will speak to my man," Mr. Silcox proceeded suavely, bent on moral instruction.

"I'm sorry—I'm sorry to trouble you," the stranger stammered. "I—I wouldn't have asked you, had I realized, Mr.—Mr. Sanders."

"No trouble at all," he answered, perfectly unconscious that his familiar and fatally notorious name had been uttered. "I'm sure that my friends"—he emphasized the word, this time, ever so slightly—"will permit me."

"Please don't bother, Mr. Sanders. Naturally I would ask no favor of you, however trivial." The motorist's tone was crisp now, and his use of the name unmistakable.

Peter Sanders started visibly and glanced at his two companions on the porch, who were staring at the newcomer in evident amazement. If they were perplexed, he was for the moment no less bewildered. Then habit asserted itself. He smiled and said quite gently: "I'm sorry you feel unable to accept so slight a benefit from me. May I ask why? To the best of my recollection, I haven't the pleasure of knowing you."

The man bit his lip. "Perhaps not, Mr. Sanders. But I happen to be the district attorney of New York. That may explain."

Peter Sanders's eyes contracted. He had never seen the man before, and had had no suspicion of his identity. For an instant he felt a touch of the faintness that had overcome him more than once in moments of excitement; but he could not afford to be beaten by any physical weakness now. He was confronting his arch-enemy. He must outface him at whatever cost. He hoped that his hesitation would pass unnoticed. With

a courteous smile still playing on his lips, he made his counter-stroke.

"Explain your rudeness, sir? I don't pretend, as it happens, to be well versed in the manners of your profession, so I can't properly judge."

"You and I have had certain dealings with one another, I think you'll remember. That may recall me to your mind." The district attorney was getting angry, it is to be feared, and spoke with a sneer.

"You may be right. You see"—Mr. Sanders's tone was low and very patient—"I turn all such matters over to my attorney, Mr. Peckham. I have done so for a long time. Mr. Grantly Peckham. You must know him, I think, if you hold the legal position you have mentioned."

"Yes, I know him well enough—as well as I know you. You don't deny that you are Peter Sanders, I suppose?"

"That isn't the question, is it? I'm not perfectly clear, myself, just why you choose to be so—well, let us say, severe with me; but I thought it was because I failed to recognize you as the district attorney of New York. I'm very much in fault, no doubt, but I'm afraid I don't study the portraits of rising celebrities with sufficient care. Of course I know your reputation quite well, sir."

"There's no use in trying to beat about the bush with me." The district attorney had quite lost his temper by this time. "You know perfectly well that I wouldn't accept help from a scalawag of a gambler like you, no matter what happened to me."

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. Sanders. "Pray, calm yourself, my dear sir. After all, I'm not insisting that you take my gasoline, you know. As a matter of fact, you could doubtless coast into the village below here without using any power at all."

"Then why have you been wasting my time? Why didn't you tell me so?" In his rage at being worsted, the district attorney became unreasonable.

"You didn't ask me, I think," said Mr. Sanders mildly. "Besides, my own time is of so little value to me that I am thoughtless about more active citizens. My life is peaceful and well-ordered. I am—I think I may say—bucolic. When you arrived, just now, I was happily conversing with two of my friends, who may possibly be as impatient to have this interview ended as I am myself."

With quiet insolence he turned his back on the motor-car. Then for the first time he looked at Mr. Corson and Mr. Fletcher, wondering sadly how much they had understood of what had been said. Their faces gave no clue, though Mr. Corson's blue eyes were twinkling.

"I suppose you and your friends are hatching some scheme to work the county fairs," shouted the district attorney, beside himself. "I'll let the newspapers loose on you, Sanders. I'll finish you!"

"Come, come," said the other man in the car, roughly. "Let's get out of this."

As they turned out of the driveway into the road, Peter Sanders sank wearily into a chair and shut his eyes. "Please sit down," he murmured. "I'll be all right in a moment."

In five minutes, indeed, he was once more chatting with his friends. Mr. Corson had summoned Henry—entering the house for the first time to do so. The three men were, for a little, much alarmed, but they were reassured by a swift return of natural color.

"I guess he'll be all right now," said Mr. Corson to Henry.

"Quite right, thank you." Mr. Sanders lifted his head. "I'm sorry to have behaved like a schoolgirl,

Mr. Corson. I hope that you and Mr. Fletcher will forgive me the trouble I've been to you. Henry—unfortunately for him—is accustomed to my vagaries."

"My, but you did give it to him!" exclaimed Mr. Fletcher. "But I don't see yet why he got so mad."

"That," said Mr. Sanders, "was what is called righteous indignation."

Mr. Corson chuckled. "He didn't spare Jabez 'n' me, for that matter. What kind of a game is it you're goin' to play at the fairs, Jabez? 'Tain't quite proper for a deacon like you to be up to tricks like that."

"I'm exceedingly sorry that I've let you in for such insults," said Mr. Sanders bitterly. "I suppose I have done wrong all summer in letting you think me a decent man."

"Oh, Mr. Sanders!" cried Henry, who had not gone inside again, but stood deferentially in the background.

"Then it's true that you be Peter Sanders? That feller wasn't mistaken?" Mr. Corson put the question sharply.

"I regret to say that it is quite true." Mr. Sanders looked him squarely in the eyes. "I didn't choose to tell the district attorney that I'm living here under a false name, that's all. I've been doing so because he won't let me live in New York in my own house, and because I find my name an inconvenience elsewhere. I'm sorrier than I can say not to have played fairly with you."

Mr. Fletcher's mouth opened and shut two or three times in an ineffectual attempt to speak. "Why, Mr. Silcox," he protested at last, "you ain't that kind of a man. I know you ain't."

Peter Sanders laughed quietly. "I'm very much afraid I am," he said. "At least, I won't deny that a good many of the things said about me are true. You

can judge for yourselves whether they are all true. I don't mind telling you that the district attorney is entirely wrong in thinking that I'd ever open my house for business again. I've come to look at some things differently within the last year."

"There, there. Don't you be too much disturbed, Mr. Silcox." Mr. Corson pulled his sharp chin meditatively. "I guess, if all was known, there's a good many who don't do quite right at one time or another."

"Still, a man ought to stick to his own name, hadn't he?" asked Mr. Fletcher.

"I suppose he ought," Mr. Sanders answered. "Certainly he hasn't any right to expose other persons to such a scene as you've had to go through with. I'm exceedingly sorry about that, as I say."

Mr. Corson's eyes grew bright with laughter again as he rose and put out his hand. "Don't let that worry you any, Mr. Silcox," he said. "Oh, don't get up. You'd better set still and get rested. No wonder you're tuckered out, after the way you give it to that feller! After all, it was a good deal like things in books—more excitement than we often hev up this way, ye know. Jabez here won't fergit it, I warrant ye."

"At least," said Mr. Sanders, "you won't be inconvenienced on my account again. I shall, of course, go away at once."

"I dunno but what you'd better," Mr. Fletcher agreed uneasily. "It might leak out."

"It won't ef you don't leak," retorted Mr. Corson hotly. "There's no reason why Mr. Silcox shouldn't stay 's long 's he pleases—no reason at all. I want you to know, Mr. Silcox, that I'm willin' to stand by ye. I don't like gamblers, and I agree that gamblin's of the devil; but I don't believe in tramplin' on a man when he's down. It's too durned easy."

"Thank you," said Peter Sanders, as he shook hands with the two men solemnly.

Nevertheless, when they had gone, he turned to the attentive Henry with a bitter smile. "You see how things go. We'd better clear out as soon as we conveniently can, I think. If we stay on, in one way or another the countryside is going to learn my real name and occupation, and the scandal that would stir up would be most unfortunate. If I ever liked to shock people, Henry, I got over it long ago."

"Yes, sir. I dare say you are right, and I will begin to make arrangements at once." Henry stood for a moment, fingering the back of a chair. His austere detachment had deserted him.

"Well, what is it, Henry? I suppose you'd like to know where we're going when we leave here. Your curiosity is not unnatural, though it's inconvenient; it always is. We'd better consider the question for a day or two, perhaps. We needn't go away till we can make proper arrangements."

"No, Mr. Silcox—I take it, sir, that you still prefer to be addressed as Mr. Silcox?" Henry spoke slowly and with more than customary stiffness.

"Certainly. We can't drop the bluff just because two of our neighbors have found out the damnable truth. They won't give me away, anyhow—at least, my friend Corson won't, and he'll be able to hold down the other man for the present."

"Yes, Mr. Silcox. What I wished to say, sir—" Henry's perturbation grew even more apparent. He gulped hard and interrupted himself, while his sad eyes widened with some hidden distress. "What I wished to say," he went on stammeringly, "is that—that I am very glad, sir. I mean, Mr. Silcox—if I may mention it—that I am very glad you are not returning to your—your business, sir."

Paul Silcox looked at him wonderingly. He had seldom known the man to utter anything so nearly approaching a personal judgment, and never of his own volition. What had happened to Henry? This was the question that he put into words.

"Oh, sir, you must forgive me. I am your servant, and a servant oughtn't to question what is done by his betters. Only—" Henry grew confused again—"I never liked the business, Mr. Silcox."

"Never liked the business?" Mr. Silcox laughed, forgetting in this new development the afternoon's disturbance. "You're a fraud, Henry! Why on earth did you stick by me as you did through those years in New York? Do you mean to say that you disapproved of my doings at the time?"

"Yes, Mr. Silcox," said Henry firmly. "I can't say that I ever liked them, but I soon saw, of course, that you needed some one to look after things. I didn't know when I came to you, you see, what went on in the house. Besides, it wasn't the kind of thing for you, sir."

"But you stayed."

"Oh, yes, sir, I wouldn't have gone away after the very first."

"Why? I don't see why you didn't throw up your job as butler when you found you'd got into a—a gambling-hell, I believe it was called. You knew that you could get another situation easily enough." Mr. Silcox was genuinely perplexed. Inexperienced in personal attachments, yet so accustomed to Henry's devotion that he took it like sunshine and fresh air, he had never understood just why he was blessed with so loyal a follower. It didn't occur to him, even now, that he had anything to do with the matter, personally.

With one of his rare smiles cracking his sombre face, Henry turned to the door of the house. "Even a ser-

vant knows when he's well off, sir," he said. "I—liked being useful to you, you see."

Peter Sanders sat gazing at the door through which Henry had disappeared. He frowned and shook his head slowly. It was no use: he couldn't make an orderly pattern of his world, and he was done with trying. He was, for instance, regarded in quite different lights by the district attorney and by Henry, which was absurd. He was merely himself, after all, and neither better nor worse than he had always been. The man whom the district attorney detested was the man whom the Reverend Doctor Henderson cultivated as a friend—none other. His case had nothing to do with double personalities, about which he had heard and read a lot of rubbish. Peter Sanders in pernicious activity as a gambler was the same Peter Sanders who was sitting here in disgruntled retirement. The more he thought about it, the more he was inclined to sympathize with the district attorney's point of view; but he was grateful, none the less, to Moses Corson for standing by him, and to Henry—oh, to Henry more than any one else—for giving him so full a measure of disapproving loyalty.

A night's deliberation, on the heels of this afternoon of disclosures, fixed Mr. Silcox in his resolve to leave his house as soon as possible; while circumstances, embodied in Henry, decreed that the following Monday was the reasonable time for departure. The five days intervening would barely suffice for breaking up the household. Mr. Silcox, though anxious to get away before he should become a stumbling-block to the community, was glad of the respite. He had much thinking to do as he sat overlooking the valley, and watched the summer world ripen magnificently to decay.

Of his acquaintances in the village and on the farms round about, he was a little shy. Those whom he chanced to meet he treated as was his wont, but he tried to avoid them when he could, keeping much to his own house. The fact that the weather had suddenly turned cold made this course easier: except at mid-day he was glad of shelter within doors and the warmth of a blazing fire.

He was sitting in front of the hearth in the comfortable living-room, indeed, of the Saturday morning, when Henry announced that Mr. Corson wished to see him.

"Won't he come in?"

"Dunno but I might 's well, after all." The rasping drawl of the voice proclaimed the visitor. He was grinning cheerfully, though he clutched a battered felt hat to his breast like a shield.

Mr. Silcox struggled to his feet and dragged another chair towards the fire. "It's very good of you to drop in," he said.

"They was sayin' down to the village that you calated on leavin' Monday, so I thought to myself I'd stop 'n' see ye for a minute."

"Do sit down here, Mr. Corson. I was afraid I shouldn't see you again. I wasn't sure, you see, whether you'd care to have me call, in spite of your kindness the other day." Mr. Silcox was both pleased and touched by the attention, for he had by no means felt certain that his friend's championship would go so far as to permit personal association with a reprobate who had been found out.

"I dunno why not," said Mr. Corson abstractedly, sinking into the chair. "I guess you wouldn't do us any harm, would ye? I'll admit"—he gazed at the fire and cackled dryly—"Jabez Fletcher's kinder un-

easy. But then, he's a deacon. We ain't quite so pious at our house."

As Mr. Corson lapsed into meditative silence, Mr. Silcox shook his head regretfully. "I don't blame him," he said, "though I'm grateful enough to you for not minding. I can see now what a shock it would be, to find that some one you'd taken for a more or less reputable citizen was a man so disgraced that he had to live under an assumed name."

"That's so," Mr. Corson agreed. "I've always felt it would be kinder creepy to see a man who'd taken another name than his own. Seems natural enough in your case, though, don't it? Funny how different things is from what you expect."

"They're not invariably quite so agreeable, I've discovered." Mr. Silcox could not help the touch of bitterness.

"That's so, too. When I was a young feller, I recall, I wanted to go to the legislature. Wal, I got elected, but somehow I didn't care much for lawmakin'. I didn't relish bein' told by the big guns what I ought to think. I'm kinder independent, I guess. Anyhow, I've been pleased to stay at home ever sence."

"You're lucky to be able to. That's where the shoe pinches with me, Mr. Corson. At my age, a man gets tired of wandering about."

"I know, I know. I c'n understand how 'twould be." Mr. Corson nodded solemnly. "'Twould be easier ef you'd no more 'n enough to live on, I guess. Then ye could buy a place without anybody's bein' the wiser, 'n' settle down."

"Oh, yes, I'd be only too glad to be let alone." Mr. Silcox smiled. "I'd be willing to throw what money I have out of the window if that would do any good. But, you see, I should probably be miserable if I didn't

have the comforts to which I've grown accustomed—even more miserable than I am now! Besides, I'm afraid I should be just as conspicuous without my money as I am with it. The name of Peter Sanders has been altogether too well advertised, Mr. Corson."

"Mebbe you're right." Mr. Corson sat thoughtfully silent for a moment. "All the same, ef you was a poor man, you could change your name and never be found out. Nobody'd expect you to hev gasolene, would they?"

"I suppose not," said Mr. Silcox. "Still, I'm afraid I haven't the courage to try the experiment—even if I knew what to do with my money."

"Wal, I guess I wouldn't ef I was you," Mr. Corson replied. "It might come in handy. Speakin' of money," he went on in a different tone, "I wonder ef you still want to do as you said the other day. I've been thinkin' it over."

"Oh, surely." Mr. Silcox pulled himself together, and his face brightened. The distraction was welcome. "Have you thought of something I could do?"

Mr. Corson crossed his legs nervously and bent forward. "I dunno how you'll feel about it. Ever notice that horse-trough right near the meetin'-house in the village? It's nothin' but wood 'n' pretty shabby. I kind of thought a ston' basin would look better."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Mr. Silcox. "I'll attend to that immediately. Perhaps we could get it into place before winter. Only"—his face clouded—"how am I going to get the thing set up and presented without giving away my name?"

"You want to keep it dark, do ye?" Mr. Corson inquired.

"Of course I do! Do you suppose I'd make a public

gift to a town as Paul Silcox, when I might be unmasked as the notorious Peter Sanders almost any day?"

"I'd thought of that," admitted Mr. Corson. "'Twon't be much trouble. I'll speak to the see-lect-men 'n' say the thing's comin'. Of course they'll know 's well 's anybody that you give it; but they'll feel important 'n' not make talk. I'll see to puttin' in the foundation ef you want."

"That's capital." Mr. Silcox momentarily grew more and more pleased and excited by the prospect of leaving to this village among the hills a solid token of his esteem. "I suppose," he went on, "you could handle a cheque signed by Peter Sanders without exciting suspicion? I'd rather not pay any bills directly that have to be paid here."

Mr. Corson gave his peculiar chuckle. "I guess I c'n cover your tracks, Mr. Silcox. I ain't accustomed to tell folks where my money comes from, besides which I hev quite a few investments. You leave it to me."

"I'll be glad to," said Mr. Silcox, "and you shall have as pretty a fountain as I can get made."

Moses Corson hitched upright in his chair preparatory to rising. "Ye won't make it too grand, though, will ye? Anything too stylish would swear at the meetin'-house."

Mr. Silcox promised, and bade his friend a regretful good-bye. It was an evil fate that parted him from congenial spirits whenever they were found, for the comets governing exiled wanderers give little chance of retracing familiar paths.

Nevertheless, when he left his romantic valley on the Monday following, Mr. Silcox did for once return to accustomed haunts. Not knowing what else to do, he struck for Boston, and took up his former quarters



DISCOVERY

151

at the Packer House. He felt that he was inviting misfortune; but he hoped, by circumspect obscurity, to evade it until he could set forth on whatever odyssey the winter provided.

CHAPTER VII

DISCLOSURES

IN WHICH PETER SANDERS MAKES CERTAIN DISCOVERIES AND
IS HIMSELF THE OBJECT OF INQUIRY

DURING his second sojourn in Boston, Mr. Silcox held himself in such utter seclusion that there appeared to be, in reality, very little chance of his meeting either enemy or friend. Into the public dining-room he seldom ventured, and then at an hour when his entrance would attract as little attention as possible. Through Henry he was able to command the best that the hotel had to offer, without making himself conspicuous either to the staff or to the other guests. His own rooms were very comfortable, and there he put on weight while he hid himself from peeping curiosities.

With Henry he had more talk than was usual. The question of the winter was serious, and entailed deep consideration. Mr. Silcox was very anxious to go back to New York, and less inclined than ever before to accept his lawyer's prohibition as final. He didn't wish to come to an open break with the authorities, to be sure; and from his recent encounter with the district attorney he realized that their temper was not sweetly forgiving. He did not care any longer, of course, for the revenge of which he had dreamed when his exile began. Yet New York was his own place, as Mrs. Trotter had phrased it over there in Devon—that was all. It epitomized to him the native land for which he had sentimentally longed while abroad. He felt that to breathe the air of the town, however obscurely, would do him good.

It occurred to him that he might, if he took proper precautions, hide himself in New York as easily as elsewhere. In a small apartment, rented perhaps by Henry for greater safety, he might have a furtive existence for many months without discovery even by his friends. Nobody thought of asking who lived in those warrens of the well-to-do. There were acres of them. Comfort, and even a degree of luxury, could be found somewhere in them with no danger at all. The apartment would have to be in a district to which he was unaccustomed, and old haunts would have to be strictly avoided. The booksellers, no less than the politicians, would have to be kept in ignorance that Peter Sanders had returned. If these conditions were satisfied, everything ought to go very well.

Henry opposed the plan at first. He did not like the notion of his master's skulking in an expensive furnished apartment when there was a perfectly ordered house awaiting him in the same town. Dignity would be compromised by such a move. It was all very well to live as you could outside of New York, but there you must keep up a certain state. At least, this was what Mr. Silcox made out from Henry's silences.

"I'm sorry that you find nothing to commend in my scheme," he said dolefully, one day. "It seems to me a pretty good one. I'll tell you. To do the thing in style, I might wear a black veil. Did you ever read the works of one of the New England writers called Hawthorne, Henry?"

"No, sir, I can't say that I have, sir, but I'm sure it would attract attention if you went about dressed like that."

Mr. Silcox looked grave. "You may be right, Henry. New York isn't Boston, of course. I was merely thinking that the plan had advantages of its own. The

gentleman about whom Hawthorne wrote wore the veil, I believe, as a sign of penitence. If the metropolitan police would only take it in that spirit, I might live in New York quite unmolested. To inquire too curiously into the past of a veiled gentleman would be indelicate of them. I should be quite willing to suffer the inconvenience of the thing, I'm sure."

"It wouldn't do, Mr. Silcox." Henry shook his head. "Indeed it wouldn't, sir."

"Possibly not. But the disguise isn't necessary, I think. After a lifetime of training, I ought to be able to keep out of the clutches of the police without wearing sackcloth. Do I look like a desperado, Henry?"

The man glanced at his employer uncomfortably, while a flicker of amusement crossed his solemn face. No one, indeed, could have seemed less apt to menace society than the stout, heavy-lidded gentleman who confronted him. Even Henry's sense of humor, naturally weak, and repressed through long years, was tickled by the notion. "I can't say that you do, sir," he said. "But your face is very well known."

"Oh, there would always be a chance that somebody would recognize me, and tell either the district attorney or the reporters; but that needn't disturb us if we were careful. I should be careful, I assure you. I should go out by stealth, and for the most part stay at home, growing fat as I do here."

"It's for you to say, Mr. Silcox." Henry was submissive but still reluctant. "I don't like it, sir, that's all."

"I know, Henry. I don't like it, myself. But the fact is, I don't see how I can do without the air of New York for a few months, even if I have to get it through a window, mostly. For a few months I think I should be safe."

"Very well, sir."

So it was at length arranged that Henry should go on to New York and look for a suitable apartment, while Mr. Silcox remained in Boston. Henry would come back as soon as possible, and later, when everything was ready, they would proceed to their winter's place of retreat. No hint must be given to any one that Peter Sanders was to return to the scene of his greatest triumphs and of his final defeat.

When Henry had gone, Mr. Silcox found himself unexpectedly helpless and, more than that, forlorn. He had not quite realized before how essential to his comfort the faithful servant had become. Not only was Henry the perfect valet, but he was a buffer between his employer and the world. It made a vast difference to any one living in such an equivocal position to have the shocks of all contact with every-day life removed. Henry did that, and he was missed. Without him Mr. Silcox was uncomfortable, nervous, and very lonely.

In a mood of black disgust with himself and with the world at large, he was threading his way up Tremont Street, one afternoon, when he ran into Doctor Henderson. It was a genuine collision, for the clergyman had just passed two stout ladies and was trying to avoid being pocketed by the next obstacle in the throng. He clutched Mr. Silcox's shoulders with stammered apologies, before he realized whom he was addressing.

Mr. Silcox, though he would have preferred not to encounter any one, greeted him cordially. The meeting was inconvenient, but it couldn't be helped. He was glad to see Doctor Henderson, as a matter of fact, however difficult might be the explanations that would have to be made, not to mention the dangers that might follow. It was best to appear gratified and to pretend

not to have had any intention of hiding. Doctor Henderson would be deeply hurt if he knew that his friend had not contemplated paying him a visit, for it was bad enough that he had passed through Boston in the spring without going out to Wrexham.

Following the precepts of a wise diplomacy, Mr. Silcox turned promptly and fell into step with the clergyman. "This is very fortunate, doctor," he began. "I've come down from New Hampshire, as you see, and am waiting here till my apartment in New York is ready for me. I've been looking forward to the pleasure of seeing you, but I didn't intend to make the meeting so abrupt."

"I am delighted—ah—delighted, Mr. Silcox," responded Doctor Henderson, linking arms with his friend. "I trust I haven't injured you in my haste. It was my fault entirely. I was going too fast. I fear that I am unreasonably annoyed by the slowness with which the crowd moves, and I become—eh—precipitate."

"Oh—then you're in a hurry. Please don't let me detain you. I'm as idle as usual, and I can see you at one time as well as another within the next few days."

"No, no—indeed no," protested Doctor Henderson. "I have to attend to one or two more—eh—errands before I take my train, but I have an abundance of time, I assure you. Would it be too much to ask if you could stroll on with me for a block or so, while we arrange for a visit more at leisure? Oh—good-afternoon, Mrs. Babington." He saluted a lady in the throng. "One of my most valued parishioners, Mr. Silcox. I should like to have you meet her when you come out to see us. When can you come, by the way?"

"My plans are quite indefinite." Mr. Silcox was groping blindly for some way of escape from the dan-

gerous invitation. Although he liked Doctor Henderson and had a decided inclination to taste the mild adventure of visiting a suburban rectory, he didn't wish to do so. It wouldn't be fair, after all, to saddle himself in his assumed character on a clergyman who might suffer, later on, if he discovered whom he had entertained.

"I am glad to know that you are not wholly occupied—" Doctor Henderson plunged ahead, not at all realizing that his attentions could be unwelcome. "My wife—eh—Mrs. Henderson will be greatly pleased to have you come out. I have told her all about you, so that she already regards you as an old friend. Could you not come to-morrow afternoon and stay to dinner—quite a family dinner, you understand?"

Mr. Silcox was at a stand. He couldn't refuse the invitation without hurting the feelings of a man whom he had learned to respect in spite of his oddities, and to regard with affection because of his simple goodness. And yet there was always the spectre of Peter Sanders rising in his path. "Confound it!" he thought. "I've no right to impose on him like this." "Thank you very much," he said aloud. "I see no reason why I shouldn't accept for to-morrow. How does one get to Wrexham, by the way?"

"I am—eh—delighted, delighted," murmured Doctor Henderson. "Our train service is convenient, though the cars are perhaps not luxurious. It is but a half-hour's run."

It was, accordingly, arranged that Mr. Silcox should go out by the 3.05 train. One could return quite easily, it appeared, whenever one liked. That was the beauty of the service. There was no question in Doctor Henderson's mind, clearly, of possible fatigue in such a journey at the end of the evening. He was accustomed

to the high-built, draughty suburban cars, and quite unconscious that they might be trying to a man of sixty who was not hardened to them. So, in a swirling crowd at the corner of a street, the friends parted.

Mr. Sanders was left much perturbed in spirit over the engagement he had made. It was odd how Doctor Henderson kept turning up to solidify a relationship that became more embarrassing, the longer it continued. To meet him on neutral ground in the rôle of Paul Silcox was one thing, to accept his hospitality quite another. The good man would be inexpressibly shocked to know that he had ever met a notorious gambler in disguise, but he would feel much worse about having dined him in his own rectory. Besides, if the story ever got out, it might make the clergyman's position in suburban Wrexham exceedingly uncomfortable—Mr. Sanders didn't know. All his earlier defiance of attitude had left him; he was anxious simply not to do harm to a dull and deserving acquaintance.

On the other hand, Doctor Henderson would feel deeply injured, no doubt, if he had reason to suspect that he was being avoided. The engagement was made, and it couldn't be broken except by an excuse of the utmost solidity: one that would carry conviction on the face of it. Even if Henry should return from New York with the news that the apartment was ready for occupation, Doctor Henderson would consider himself affronted by a hasty departure and an apology. A feigned illness, moreover, would surely bring the good fellow into town on an errand of consolation and mercy. The upshot of the matter was that the adventure must be put through, no matter what the danger to host and guest alike.

Paul Silcox's heart sank, however, as he took his train, the following afternoon. He felt that he was

doing wrong, and could not wholly stifle his conscience by assuring himself that the wrong was unavoidable. As the train progressed by slow stages through the nearer and uglier suburbs, he was almost inclined to get out and go back. The only thing that sustained him was his curiosity to see a man of Doctor Henderson's type in the proper setting. That would be a novel experience. He leaned back against the faded cushions of his seat and thought of the situation, trying to imagine what it would be like to have a successful clerical career behind one, and what it would mean in that case to stumble into friendly relations with an unconverted gambler. He could not go far with these speculations, much as they amused him, because he lacked the basis of experience; but he busied himself with the problem till he heard from a trainman the raucous call that announced his station.

He was met on the platform by Doctor Henderson, who beamed with delight as he greeted him. A brief drive in a vehicle called a hack—awaking odd reminiscences in the mind of the guest, who had seen nothing quite like it for years—took them through pleasant streets to the suitably pleasant rectory. There were many trees about: along the streets, and within the ample grounds in which were set Trinity Church, a parish house, and Doctor Henderson's dwelling. The trees, though they were already showing their branches with the advance of autumn, gave an air of quiet distinction to a group of buildings that of itself had dignity but no special grace. Just the background for his clerical friend, thought Mr. Silcox, as the carriage pulled up at the door of the rectory.

Within, they were welcomed by Mrs. Henderson, a little lady in gray and white, with a positive manner which seemed oddly out of keeping with her appearance.

She had just come in from something she called a guild meeting—something quite incomprehensible to Mr. Silcox—and she seemed a little flurried with the effort she had made to escape in time to meet their guest. Nevertheless, she was unmistakably cordial and remarked at once on the pleasure she felt in meeting him. He had been very kind to her husband in Florida; had done a great deal towards restoring to Joseph the vigor he had been seeking there; had relieved her mind immensely, when she heard of their excursions, for she had been rather anxious lest the holiday, lacking her personal supervision, should prove a failure.

Apparently as a matter of course, she led the way into Doctor Henderson's comfortable study at the left of the hall. Paul Silcox, keenly alert to his novel surroundings, noted with satisfaction that the rugs islanded in the wide hall were good and that the study was a well-conditioned room properly lined with books. He was glad to find that clergymen did not always live in the shabby and painful decency pictured in novels. He had realized, of course, that Doctor Henderson could not be desperately poor, but he had anticipated something frowsy and fusty about his way of life at home.

Talk passed easily from Florida to the casual encounter of the summer, hovered a little while on doings in the parish, and rested more at length on books. It was managed, Mr. Silcox perceived with interest, by little Mrs. Henderson, the iron hand of whose conversational manner sometimes showed beneath the velvet glove. No one could object to her manœuvring, however, which was altogether for the best. She bridged her husband's hesitancies and supplied his lacunæ; she brightened his faint tediousness by her own activity. Paul Silcox watched her, and followed her lead appreciatively. He had never met any creature who was

at all like her, and he found her wholly delightful, wondering the while that new kinds of people should so frequently cross the path of his furtive wanderings. He had prided himself of old that he had nothing to learn about humanity, yet within less than two years he had seen more different types than he had encountered in the previous decade. Mrs. Henderson seemed to him one of the best.

When, after lamps had been lighted and curtains drawn, she left the two men to themselves, Mr. Silcox felt altogether sorry. His cigar and the gently blazing fire were of the same quality as before, but they gave him less satisfaction. He began to wonder again whether he had not done very wrong in coming to this peaceful household, which would be so distraught if it knew whom it was really entertaining. He found Doctor Henderson, moreover, a little dull.

It was with great joy that he greeted Mrs. Henderson's reappearance, some twenty minutes later. She was visibly excited about something, but slipped into a chair so quickly that Mr. Silcox and her husband had no time to rise.

"Such good news, Joseph!" she began. "And I know that you'll be pleased, too, Mr. Silcox. Gresham has just telephoned that he is in Boston and will be out for dinner. It will be a real reunion, won't it?"

"Gresham is, of course, our friend Gresham Clapp," explained Doctor Henderson. "How—ah—delightful! He had not informed us that he was coming on."

Paul Silcox controlled with an effort his extreme vexation. What a fool he had been, to be sure! He might have known that something of this kind would happen, but he was in for it now. No retreat was possible. Everything depended on young Clapp's discretion, which might or might not be adequate to the oc-

casion, but probably wouldn't be. The meeting would be difficult for both of them. Meanwhile, there was nothing for it but to pretend a satisfaction he was far from feeling.

"I am, indeed, very fortunate in being here to-day," he said mechanically.

"Gresham will be as delighted as we are, I'm sure," Mrs. Henderson replied. "I haven't seen the boy for nearly a year, Mr. Silcox, and I'm devoted to him."

"Did you tell him of the pleasure that is in—in store for him, my dear?" asked Doctor Henderson.

"No," she confessed. "I thought I'd give him a surprise, so I said nothing about it. He's coming out right away."

Doctor Henderson nodded approvingly. "Quite so. Magnificent—magnificent."

"You're perfectly sure that I shan't be in the way, that you don't want him all to yourselves? I might see him in town, you know." Mr. Silcox offered the futile suggestion rather from the instinct to make a gesture of avoidance than with any hope that he could thereby escape.

"Please don't think of it for a moment," answered Mrs. Henderson in her downright way. "It would spoil everything if you weren't here, of course—everything about this special party."

So Paul Silcox was doomed to wait for an hour, in dread of an encounter that could not help being very painful to him, talking meanwhile for the most part about the excellent promise and the charming personality of Gresham Clapp. The only alleviation of his misery was the thought that the young man must suffer also. Even the most callow and unscrupulous egotist could not help feeling embarrassed in the circumstances. All the same, the prospect was unpleasant

to Mr. Silcox for many reasons. There was the danger that Clapp, in consternation, might give him away; there was the inevitable soreness about meeting a man who had played false with friendship, and there was Mr. Silcox's uneasy sense that Peter Sanders had no business in Wrexham. Besides, he couldn't hold himself altogether blameless in the matter of a great number of young men who had lost money at his house.

So great was the strain of keeping up conversation with his kind hosts that Mr. Silcox found the entrance of Gresham Clapp almost a relief. At least, he was not sorry when the door opened and the youth entered, quite unannounced. For a moment all went well. The clergyman and his wife sprang up to meet him, while Mr. Silcox—whose back was turned—rose more deliberately. There were welcoming cries, a kiss for "Aunt Emma," and a hearty hand-clasp for "Uncle Joseph." Then Mr. Silcox faced about.

"How do you do, Mr. Clapp?" he said easily.

Gresham Clapp dropped Doctor Henderson's hand and looked at the speaker with widening eyes. His tall figure stiffened, as if his nerves had braced themselves instinctively at the shock of something not quite natural. His face reddened painfully.

"We have a delightful surprise for you, my boy—very delightful," babbled Doctor Henderson.

Mr. Silcox did not step forward. It was perhaps a little cruel of him to force the young man into making the first move; but he wished to test the ground on which he was standing.

"Isn't it fortunate that Mr. Silcox should happen to be here to-day!" Mrs. Henderson's exclamation broke what threatened to be an awkward silence, and it seemed somehow to release Gresham Clapp from his frightened rigidity.

"I'm glad—to see you—again, Mr. Silcox," he gasped, extending his hand as he approached.

He was so clumsy in his attempt to play his part, and yet so obviously determined to act as though nobody had any past to conceal, that Mr. Silcox began to pity him. "I trust that you have been well since we met in Florida," he said, shaking hands. The touch of formality was in a tone quite proper to an elderly banker who was renewing acquaintance with a young man like Mr. Clapp. No one could have suspected from it that anything was amiss between them.

"Very well, thank you," answered Gresham Clapp with more assurance. "I hope you can say the same for yourself, sir."

"I have no reason to complain," said Mr. Silcox. "I was very glad to hear about you through your father, last summer."

"My father?"

"Yes, yes indeed, Gresham," put in Doctor Henderson. "Did not your father—ah—inform you that we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Silcox when we went up for Commencement?"

"No, he didn't happen to mention it." Mr. Clapp's embarrassment again became acute.

"Very naturally. Our meeting was brief and altogether casual. But I fear that we are tiring Mrs. Henderson. Shan't we sit down?" Mr. Silcox took command of the situation. He could see that their host and hostess were conscious of something amiss, yet unable to deal with anything so vague. If there was to be a truce of hostilities, the strain must be relaxed for their sake. Perhaps the evening could be got through without misadventure; it put one on one's mettle, at all events.

"Yes, do let us sit down," said Mrs. Henderson.

"Pretty soon all of us must make our simple preparations for dinner. How do you happen to be in the East, Gresham?"

The consequent explanations led them into talk of harmless triviality, until the awkwardness of the meeting seemed to be forgotten. It was not very long, indeed, before they had to separate, to meet only at the instant when dinner was announced.

In the dining-room, as in the house at large, Mr. Silcox found a degree of simple and civilized comfort that was very grateful to him. Not a bad way for human beings to live, he thought, at the moment of their down-sitting. In only one minor particular did he find himself at a loss in the unfamiliar surroundings: he could not immediately interpret the slight anticipatory hush that fell upon the group as soon as they were seated. The saying of grace was a rite he had never met with except in fiction. Consequently he talked rather past the point of silence, and blushed inwardly for his clumsiness thereafter. Nothing gave him a pleasanter sense of the good breeding of the household than the tact with which his blunder was ignored. In spite of the difficulties of his position, he felt very much at home, on the whole, in the atmosphere of the rectory.

Indeed, as dinner progressed, he rather wondered at the ease with which they were all talking. Not often, surely, did a respectable clergyman and his wife have to entertain guests so hostile to one another and so out of place in any decent man's house. The presence of young Clapp quickened his disagreeable consciousness that his own career had not been wholly creditable, while he was inclined to believe that a youth who could cheat an elderly gentleman out of several thousand dollars by playing on his sympathies was not

a fit person to be where he was. Even though the treachery had been prompted by the wish for revenge, it was reprehensible. Mr. Silcox had not recovered, you will see, from the wound that had been dealt him, and he had not forgiven the man who gave it.

At the same time, he could not help acknowledging to himself that Gresham was quite as charming a creature as ever. Wrong-doing had not yet taken from him the light of a clear eye or the tone of buoyant youth. When the first awkwardness had passed, he was merry with his elders, and at the same time deferential to them, just as he had seemed in Florida. His manners in conversation were admirable, whatever might be thought of his epistolary style. It was hard to believe him capable of the dastardly trick he had been guilty of a few months earlier; and, the longer one was with him, the more difficult it became to keep his real character in mind.

Mr. Silcox's melting mood grew even more gentle in Doctor Henderson's study after dinner. The fire-light, the somewhat extravagantly good cigar—the box a gift, as their host explained—and the mild hum of friendly talk were an anodyne against harshness of judgment. The thought that he must later journey back to town with Gresham Clapp, which the host and hostess took for granted, became at first tolerable and finally almost pleasant. The slow and halting return past unnumbered suburban stations had seemed, all along, an appalling price to pay for the agreeable if hazardous hours of the visit. Companionship of almost any kind would mitigate the hardness of it, and he came to regard the companionship of the young scalawag who had fleeced him, as a prospective blessing.

Moreover, now that he was in for it, he was glad of the opportunity to study his youthful enemy a little

more closely. He had seldom been at fault in reading the motives of men who were pitted against him, and he had had wide experience. He was piqued by the mistake he had made in this instance, and he now realized that wounded vanity was a factor in the hurt he had received. The truth was that in Florida he had never properly observed Gresham Clapp at all: had taken him, in spite of Henry's warnings, at face value—to his own undoing. It would be a satisfaction to probe the case till he really understood, though the knowledge would be of little use to him. A cynical amateur of human nature cannot afford to let his wits grow slack through disuse.

The after-dinner conversation yielded at first little that served his purpose. Every one was at ease, and every one behaved as if the rector's study was his proper background. In circumstances that made it easy for Peter Sanders to pose as a respectable banker, Mr. Silcox reflected, Gresham Clapp was unlikely to reveal sinister aspects. When they were alone, it would be different: a little shrewd questioning would bring out the truth.

As events turned, however, he did not have to wait so long for illumination. It came dramatically, and Doctor Henderson was its innocent cause.

"I have not yet told you," he said, smiling benevolently, "of the pleasure it gave us, my dear Gresham, to hear from your father that he had given you—eh—responsibilities in connection with his business. It was a satisfaction to us—a great satisfaction."

"Thanks," said Gresham hastily. "Dad has been working me for every ounce I can put on, I tell you. He seems to think that I ought to be the pack-horse of the whole concern. However, I don't object. It's good fun to get your fingers on a big machine going

full tilt—much better fun than eating husks, really. I—” By chance or intention he glanced at Mr. Silcox, who was watching him closely, and he blushed as he suddenly fell silent.

Doctor Henderson, unconscious that trouble was brewing, pursued his own line of thought. “I was only a little disturbed by the account your father gave of the special circumstances that influenced him. I trust that the story of your dealings with regard to the property in the Everglades was—ah—exaggerated.”

“Indeed, he did make the tale rather shocking, Mr. Clapp,” remarked Paul Silcox, with twinkling eyes. “You see he explained the case in my presence.”

“I haven’t been told. What is it, Gresham?” Mrs. Henderson demanded gently.

Under the bombardment of comment and question, Gresham Clapp grew still redder, but he stood his ground. “It’s merely that I disposed of some land in Florida rather advantageously, Aunt Emma. That’s all.”

The spirit of mischief, for nothing else could have prompted him to the indiscretion, led Mr. Silcox to say: “Not quite all, is it, Mr. Clapp?”

Then Doctor Henderson’s high-pitched voice cut in with an even more dangerous observation: “What I cannot understand, my dear Gresham, is how you could have met a man like this Sanders—was it not Sanders, Mr. Silcox?—in so quiet a place as Orlando.”

“I don’t know. He happened to be there, I suppose. I want you to understand—all of you—that I don’t defend what I did.” The youth’s tone was a little sullen, and his clear eyes had grown hard. To Paul Silcox the answer was unexpected, and it made him more curious than ever to learn what lay beneath the surface. Did the boy think to make matters right with an indirect apology? Was he trying to do that?

"Certainly I could not—ah—condone your selling the land if it was not valuable." Doctor Henderson's face was very solemn as he pronounced the judgment. "As I told your father, I feel sure that this notorious Mr. Sanders must have had some scheme in mind when he took it over—some speculative project."

"Not a bit of it." Gresham Clapp's voice rose, keen and defiant now, after the rector's attempt to gloss the matter over. "Excuse me, Aunt Emma. I'm sorry to have to tell you these things, but I've got to, in decency. You may not want me about when you know what I did, but that can't be helped either. I cheated Mr. Sanders out of ten thousand dollars because I'd lost something like that at his place in New York, and because I knew I could square myself with my father that way. There's the whole story, and there's no defence to make."

"Why—Gresham!" exclaimed Doctor Henderson, while his wife, who was sitting near, stretched out a hand in silence and clutched the young man's sleeve.

The real Peter Sanders blinked. So that was it! The cub still had scruples that the father could not appreciate, and he was troubled by his conscience. Something must have happened to him since the winter, it would appear, though Peter Sanders couldn't imagine what. At all events, he was stalwart enough about acknowledging himself in the wrong, and generous to a degree. Such generosity demanded a response in kind. Whatever lay back of the confession, it could have been made only because they were there together. To the Hendersons no explanations were due; they were almost certain, indeed, to destroy a relation that had evidently been very precious to a motherless boy with a money-machine of a father. So much had been made clear by two hours' observation. It was not

strange that Mr. Sanders blinked, nor that he found himself cured of the wound which had been rankling for so long.

This was no time for cynicism, and no occasion for prudence. One couldn't be outdone in generosity by a lad in his early twenties; what was more, one couldn't allow him to do himself an injury, and wound his best friends, without making some move to match candor with candor. Intuition and impulse, held firmly in check by reason, had played a conspicuous rôle in Mr. Sanders's life, and they did so now. He thought swiftly and acted with decision. Although the record of it seems involved and perhaps tedious, he passed through all the stages of his inquiry so rapidly that there was a scarcely perceptible interval between Doctor Henderson's exclamation and his own speech.

"I think there *is* something to be said in your defence, however," he began quietly. "As a matter of fact, I think there is a good deal. Doctor Henderson, I have to confess to you that I am not a respectable person at all: I am Peter Sanders."

There was an outburst of horror from Gresham Clapp. "Don't! Don't, Mr. Sanders! I wasn't going to give you away."

"I am aware of that," said Mr. Sanders, smiling very calmly both at him and at their host and hostess, who sat quite rigid and frozen in their chairs. "I am also well aware that you wouldn't have given yourself away if you hadn't met me here—where I have no business to be. The fact is, doctor, that I have been living under a false name in order to associate with people who would otherwise have had nothing to do with me. You know my record, and you know something about my real tastes. Perhaps you can see the temptation."

The clergyman gazed straight before him, obviously unable to speak, though his mouth was working feverishly. It was Mrs. Henderson who broke the silence that followed Mr. Sanders's declaration.

"Joseph," she said in a voice unnaturally thin and strained, "what does this mean? I think you ought to say something."

Doctor Henderson started. "Yes—yes, my dear, so I ought. This is extraordinary—quite extraordinary!"

Gresham Clapp rose impatiently, as if he must relieve the strain by physical action as well as words. "It's simple enough—" he began.

"Please let me continue," Mr. Sanders interposed. "I have still to apologize, doctor, for my unintended intrusion on Mrs. Henderson and yourself. I had little scruple about taking an assumed name in order to avoid attention in public places; but I had never meant to get entangled as I have. I didn't foresee the difficulty one might have in severing a pleasant acquaintance. As to our young friend here, I dare say he was tempted to get even with me by my folly in playing the ostrich. I must admit that I was deeply hurt by what he did, but I don't grudge him the money. Indeed, he doubtless has more right to it than I have."

"The money he gambled with was his father's," observed little Mrs. Henderson dryly. "He has it again now, I judge."

"Yes, by means of a dirty trick." Gresham Clapp scowled. "I didn't know till just now that my father had learned whom I sold the land to, and I hope he feels as I do about it. Anyhow, Mr. Sanders, I owe you ten thousand dollars, which I'm going to pay as soon as I can. Please believe so much good of me. The land isn't worth anything at present, and may never be."

Peter Sanders felt crushed and humiliated. The

cold glance of Mrs. Henderson, and the utter embarrassment of her husband, hurt him equally, though he was disinclined to blame them for casting him off. His sole comfort was his renewed confidence in the defiant young man who balanced himself uneasily on the hearth-rug before them. He must set Gresham Clapp right with these good people before he left them forever.

"My dear boy," he said with genuine feeling, "let us not mention the money again. As Mrs. Henderson says, it has gone back to your father, where it belonged in the first place. I'm quite content."

"I'm going to pay you, all the same." Young Mr. Clapp had his father's obstinacy of purpose. "Don't you think I ought to, Uncle Joseph?"

Thus appealed to, Doctor Henderson seemed to drag himself from his bewilderment. "I think you—eh—ought, Gresham. You did very wrong in gambling, and you got the money back unfairly. I am glad that you see the case so clearly—deeply gratified. This has been a great shock to me." He turned to Peter Sanders. "I can scarcely believe, sir, that—that you are what you acknowledge."

"Unfortunately I am," returned Mr. Sanders sadly. "Please don't be too much troubled, however. I shall drop out of sight as Paul Silcox, immediately, and I think there's no danger of any one's knowing that you have ever had the unspeakable Sanders as your guest."

Doctor Henderson drew himself up very straight, and his mild eyes grew bright. "Do you think I care about that?" he asked scornfully. "Under your own name I shall always be glad to see you, here or elsewhere. Do I make myself clear—eh—Mr. Sanders?"

"Bully for you, Uncle Joseph!" exclaimed young Gresham. "Look here, Aunt Emma, won't you join

in the little peace conference? Mr. Sanders and I have to start for our train in about five minutes, and we'd like to be forgiven before we leave."

Mrs. Henderson rose quickly, bringing the whole party to its feet, and put her hands out to the young man. "Gresham, dear," she said, "it's only you and Mr. Sanders who have anything to forgive. Your uncle and I have merely to show a little Christian charity. Don't you see? And both of you have made it singularly easy."

"That is very good of you." Mr. Sanders was so deeply moved that he found it hard to say what had to be said. "I haven't met with much kindness in my life—probably I have deserved little. Certainly I have a great deal to regret. I can't feel wholly sorry, however, that I came here—except as it has been a trouble to you. If you will permit a godless old man with a past to say it, I have had my eyes opened to-day, and I am grateful for it."

"Now that I reflect upon it," remarked Doctor Henderson, taking the hand of Mr. Sanders, "the disclosures that have been made by you and Gresham have been—ah—a revelation to me also. I should not have thought it possible that any one in your—your—position could be what I have found you. But surely—surely you are not now——"

"Decidedly not, doctor." Mr. Sanders shook his head. "I may as well tell you the whole truth. When I was forced out of business, I planned to go back to it as soon as possible; but I've learned a number of things since. My punishment is that I can't live at home, and have to drift idly about the world, doing nothing either good or bad. Nobody in New York would believe, of course, in my change of opinion, though the fact is that I'd no more run a gambling

establishment again than you would. I hope you understand that."

"I understand. Your position is—is not easy, Mr. Sanders. Meanwhile, will you not still count us as friends? I should be very glad if you would write me from time to time. I hope we may keep in touch with one another."

"Thank you, I will," said Peter Sanders gravely.

"The cab has driven up," announced Gresham Clapp. "We must get off."

There was a hurried leave-taking, which was perhaps just as well, since every one was a good deal shaken. Once in the cab, Peter Sanders relapsed into silence, and his companion made no attempt to talk. It was not until they were seated in the jolting, draughty train that they exchanged more than the few absolutely necessary words.

It was Gresham Clapp who, at length, took the lead. Their car was nearly empty, which gave them almost the privacy of a room to themselves. "Mr. Sanders," he said earnestly, "I hope you don't think I was trying to force you into the open. I didn't mean to do that, but I couldn't sit still and hear you damned when you weren't there, so to speak."

"That's why I gave myself away, of course." Mr. Sanders smiled. He was very well content with his evening, and not inclined to thresh over old straw. "Admirable people, the doctor and Mrs. Henderson," he went on inconsequentially.

"Yes, aren't they splendid!" The boyish face beside him lighted up.

"Of course," said Mr. Sanders, "I shan't see them again—it might be embarrassing, in spite of their goodwill—but I'm glad to have known them. You're a lucky fellow to have that kind of thing to go to."

"That's true enough, though I haven't shown much effect of it, I'm afraid. The fact is, Mr. Sanders, I've never realized till lately the difference between what's decent and what's wrong."

"I'm not an authority on such questions"—Peter Sanders made a little grimace, wondering what was coming now—"but I have the notion that it isn't always easy to tell."

"Oh, I don't know," answered the young man with the self-assurance of the twenties. "If anybody keeps his eyes open and isn't too everlastingly stuck on himself, I guess he can make out what he ought to do. It's done me a lot of good, worrying about the dirty trick I played you. By the way, I mean what I said about paying that money back. I've got to do it, or I'll never feel clean inside. That business has taught me a lot."

For a moment, Peter Sanders was inclined to protest. What about *his* inner self? If, without restitution of unjust gains, peace of mind was impossible, there was little hope for him. He was about to say as much, but instead he remained silent. Probably the boy was right, and probably he ought to have the chance to feel clean. For himself the chance didn't exist. He had shuffled right and wrong all his life, as he had shuffled his cards, and he must pay for his game without whimpering.

"Take your time, at least, if you are determined to do it," was all he had the heart to say. "Do you mind telling me," he went on after a moment, "what started you thinking about all this? We've been remarkably personal to-night, and I've been wondering."

Gresham Clapp looked at him quizzically before he replied. "It's queer you asked that," he said very slowly, "and what's queerer is that I've never thought about it till now. I don't know. There's been a good

deal of talk lately about business morality, you know; perhaps that set me going. Besides, the fact is, Mr. Sanders, I met a girl this summer that I intend to marry sometime. I shouldn't want to ask her if I weren't decently straight." He laughed uneasily.

Mr. Sanders flashed one look at the young man beside him, then dropped his eyelids. "I remember—I remember," he said as if to himself. "It was like that. It's a pity that I forgot." Then he gripped his companion's wrist. "My boy, you know more about Peter Sanders than any one has known for almost forty years. Never mind about that, but don't—for God's sake—don't forget about the girl. Now if you don't mind, we'll discuss the stock-market."

CHAPTER VIII

HIBERNATION

IN WHICH ARE SKETCHED THE LESS TEDIOUS FEATURES OF A
WINTER OF DISCONTENT

A COUPLE of days after Mr. Sanders's visit at Wrexham, Henry returned from New York with the news that he had found an apartment, which might do, in default of anything better, as a hiding-place. He was scornful of it; but he thought, considering its location—far up on the heights that skirt the North River—and the purposes for which it was to be used, that nothing better could be obtained. He had, indeed, condescended to rent it for eight months.

"Very well, Henry," said Mr. Sanders. "I feel sure you have found exactly the place I need, and I'm for getting off at once. By the way, our friend Paul Silcox is going to die an unnatural death as soon as we leave the hotel here. He has served his turn, perhaps, but he has never been quite respectable."

"You mean, sir—?" There was a trace of alarm in Henry's manner.

Mr. Sanders looked up from the *Evening Postscript* and shook his head gravely. "I mean that Paul Silcox went visiting Doctor Henderson and met young Mr. Clapp. You remember the gentleman, I'm sure. Things happened that forced Mr. Silcox into explaining himself, which was very awkward. He'll now have to disappear."

"Oh, sir, I'm very sorry, Mr. Silcox—till we leave, sir."

"Quite so, Henry. No great harm has been done, fortunately. I'm rather glad it happened, to tell the truth, and I'm going to resume my own name as soon as possible. Did you take the apartment for yourself or for me? That becomes a question of some interest."

"I took it in my name, which I hope was right, sir."

"Exactly right. You can be my landlord for the next months if you don't mind. I shall probably be a troublesome lodger, but I shan't be giving many parties. I can't see who would be coming to see me, unless it should be the police, which I hope to avoid."

"Yes, sir."

"Having mentioned my visit to Doctor Henderson, Henry," Mr. Sanders went on, "I ought to tell you that I've revised my opinion of young Mr. Clapp. We've admitted our mutual errors and resumed friendly relations. As I was saying, I'm rather glad we met. It has cleared up an unfortunate incident."

Henry looked doubtful. "I'm very glad if it's all right, sir, but I hope you won't trust him too far—if I may say so."

Peter Sanders shook his head. "I fear, Henry, that you've been corrupted by living so long with me. Cynicism is a vice, and you are shockingly infected with it. You will soon be telling me that the district attorney of New York is actuated by unworthy motives in compelling me to hide in a flat, when I have a perfectly satisfactory house of my own."

Henry made no reply, thus expressing, better than he could have done in words, his gentle disapproval of frivolity and his complete bewilderment in the face of anything not wholly matter of fact. He seemed, during the next days, however, to be living in the fear that his employer would do something rash, and he hurried preparations for the advance on New York

with breathless energy. Though he disliked the plan for the winter, he showed far more eagerness than Mr. Sanders in executing it, presumably because he dreaded further encounters with the young man who had showed himself so masterly an exponent of chicane.

It was decided that there would be a measure of imprudence in entering New York by rail, since Peter Sanders always stood in danger of recognition. A furtive approach by motor would be safer and, while the good weather lasted, quite as comfortable. By means of a hired car, it would be possible to reach the apartment quite unobserved: not even the chauffeur need know whom he was assisting to voluntary imprisonment.

For that was what it came to, as Mr. Sanders realized when the time approached for making the plunge. The precautions he must take would leave him little freedom. He would have the air of New York and little else, and even the air he must breathe under irksome restrictions. He told himself very sternly that he must never leave his apartment except with coat-collar turned up and hat pulled down, while preferably he ought always to go abroad in a limousine. As for society, there would be—as usual—Henry. It wouldn't be safe, he thought regretfully, to let even good fellows like Jim Garmany into the secret. Mr. Peckham must know, of course, because Peckham always knew; but Grantly Peckham, though an eminent lawyer, would never relieve the loneliness of any one. A desert of a man, Peckham was, as far as Peter Sanders had observed.

Yet the swift flight across New England, and the entry into New York on a golden day of late autumn, had a tonic effect. Despite all drawbacks, this was a home-coming: something he had dreamed of for a year.

A fresh wind was blowing down from the Connecticut hills to the Sound; fallen leaves, still unsodden by rain, were dancing across the road when the car passed through stretches of woodland; the air made a festival of any action, as it can, at its best, in our October and November. There appeared at length the spray of suburban settlements, thickening and widening till they were merged in the outrushing wave of the metropolis. Mean things looked tolerable and ugly things gay in the soft, clean light. A New Yorker, though he returned by stealth, could not help feeling both joy and pride in the magnificence of the film as it unrolled to its conclusion before an apartment-house perched high above the river.

Under the stimulation of the day, the apartment itself seemed more than possible to Mr. Sanders. If it was cramped in space and commonplace of design, in comparison with his own house, it still furnished a bachelor of simple tastes though luxurious habits with quite adequate quarters. The living-room would certainly hold all the books that a man really needed for a winter's browsing, and its western windows had a superb outlook. Yes, the outlook almost compensated of itself for any disadvantages that the rooms showed. The broad river and the peopled heights beyond were graciously majestic, and they gave the key to the whole symphony of commerce that was being played farther down towards the sea. In the exaltation of the moment, Peter Sanders was happily unconscious that he would come to detest the view, before the winter was over, almost as much as he detested the district attorney.

It is really rather wonderful that he did not become discontented sooner than he did. For a good many weeks, indeed, he was happier in his self-constituted solitude than he had been even on his hilltop in New

Hampshire. Though he had wished to be in New York, he had no desire to renew the feverish excitement of his old life there, and for a time he was contented with the bare fulfilment of his dream. Merely to be once more at his cosmic centre, sufficed to give him a sense of established peace that he had always lacked during his travels.

Henry had arranged things, moreover, exceedingly well. A close-mouthed man had been abstracted from the household down-town, and the service the two gave was unnoticeable in its smooth perfection. Any books from his library, furthermore, for which Mr. Sanders expressed a wish, were obtained without apparent difficulty. The game of selecting, of handling old favorites again, and of adjusting them amiably alongside newer treasures obtained abroad kept him busy for some time. While this occupation lasted, he had no reason for complaint. His book-shelves were more interesting than anything outside; only the firmness of Henry drove him to take the air.

At first, also, there was excitement in merely living and exercising on forbidden ground. Peter Sanders was always a little ashamed of himself for feeling it—he the unscarred veteran of the fields of chance—but he was too clear-sighted not to recognize that he liked not only the notion of eluding the district attorney so easily, but the slight danger lest he be discovered after all. He had an unworthy sensation of triumph when he returned from a stroll, and a thrill of romantic interest in getting back safely from an afternoon's motoring.

Both these sources of amusement failed, however, after winter had set in: the books were arranged, and the stealthy expeditions became an old story. There remained just enough fear of discovery to prevent his

settling down to solid enjoyment in reading. Between his eyes and the page would form pictures, vague but disquieting, of what might happen if a reporter should stumble across his trail. He had never been the victim of vain imaginings, and he could stand on his record as a man of singular courage. He was not afraid now, but he couldn't concentrate his mind on the tasks that would have made him contented with solitude. At least, that was how he accounted for the nervous tremors that beset him. He was disappointed with himself for permitting such considerations to distract him, but he was nevertheless unable to control his thoughts.

The monotonous succession of the days seemed endless in prospect, yet they surprisingly passed. Peter Sanders fretted, and discovered that it was midwinter before he had realized that the cold months had fairly begun. It is quite clear that, in spite of his chafing under restraint, the only thing that made his situation tolerable was the clandestine nature of his excursions out of doors. He could not read properly in such conditions, but he was kept going by the spice of uncertainty. Ordinarily, he walked the bleak streets in the neighborhood of his apartment, wondering that people enough could be found to fill the vast buildings, so new and so characterless, out of which the district had suddenly come into being; or he was borne northward in the motor-car that Henry had provided, through nondescript suburban regions, into pleasant country tracts that were already spreading their nets for the commuter.

Sometimes, muffled to the ears, he drove the length of Manhattan itself, painfully aware that he disturbed his peace of mind without profit, by looking at familiar sights, but unable to resist the temptation. To become an unconsidered atom of the throng that filled

Fifth Avenue of an afternoon, was an experience that gave him a momentary satisfaction, against which he did not weigh his inevitable reaction of discontent. Perfectly secure, yet conscious that he might get into serious trouble if he were caught trespassing in the very garden of morality from which he had been warned out, he tasted the foolish joys of the small boy who has climbed an orchard fence. The difficulty was that he couldn't, like the boy, snatch any fruit. He could see his beloved city growing more and more unlike itself, but he could never stop to observe the details of the process—unless, of course, a traffic policeman lifted his compelling hand. It was altogether tantalizing and unsatisfactory, yet perpetually alluring, this inspection; it took him from the Harlem to the Battery and brought back to mind many parts of town once known, but long since almost forgotten; it gave him a sense of living against his proper background, which he missed in his gilded cage up-town, and it roused in him, ultimately, the most violent discontent.

The truth was that he was very lonely. During all the months of his incarceration on the Heights, if we except casual encounters and conversations with his two servants, he talked with only two human beings.

The first of these was the superintendent in charge of the building in which he lived. This man, though a person of dignity and an official not unmindful of his importance in the state to which God had called him, had a turn for investigation that could not bear to leave any mystery unsolved. Very soon after Mr. Sanders's arrival, he grew dissatisfied with the explanations Henry had offered him, and he thereupon began to make his inquiries. His methods were not those of any established school of secret-service experts, but they were effective. He made an excuse for entering the apart-

ment, one day, and by sheer effrontery gained the presence of Mr. Sanders.

"Say," he remarked, grinning widely at the modest tenant, "you don't look like a dead man."

Peter Sanders struggled to his feet hastily and confronted him. "I'm not," he said. "I take it from the conversation I have just overheard between you and my man that you have charge of this building; but I hadn't supposed it was run as a morgue. If it is, I shall get out at once."

The intruder broke into harsh but good-natured laughter. "That's a good one," he admitted. "I wouldn't call this a dead-house, either. But from what your butler has been telling me right along, I thought you must be about due to go to one. Only you haven't struck me as a very sick man when I've seen you go out. That's why I dropped in."

"It is very kind of you to take such an interest in my health," said Mr. Sanders coldly. "Fortunately I am well cared for by my excellent servants, and have no need of special attention."

"I wouldn't get huffy if I was you." Hitching up his trousers violently, the man sat down. He was a raw-boned, uncouth person with thin, reddish hair, protruding ears, and the general look of a village loafer. His impudence was in character with the part for which nature had seemingly intended him.

"I'm not huffy," replied Mr. Sanders, "but I am exceedingly bored. I'm ready to admit that I shall be glad when your duties in my apartment—whatever they are—have been completed."

"I've got it!" The superintendent slapped his knee enthusiastically. "Say, my name's Lamberton. As long's everything's all right, I won't give you away, but I thought your face wasn't strange to me."

"I'm sure it won't be again." Mr. Sanders was greatly annoyed, quite as much by Lamberton's staring as by the sudden realization that his retreat had been discovered. He had no faith in the man's promise not to expose him, but at the moment he thought less of this than about the personal indignity to which he was being subjected.

"No, I guess I won't forget you in a hurry," said Lamberton. "Funny I didn't recognize you right away. I always like to study the pictures of public men, and I know most of them by sight. I don't see how I slipped up on you—I don't, really. Now, I've seen your picture in the papers I don't know how many times."

"I have been interfered with in many ways, but I'm not any more patient with intruders on that account." Mr. Sanders's cold tone should have been enough to dislodge his unwelcome visitor.

Instead, it seemed to fix him in his place. "I don't blame you, Mr. Sanders," he said sympathetically. "I guess there are some drawbacks about being famous. I never heard of a man, though, who did just as you've done. It must be fierce when it gets so bad you have to clear out of your own house and hide."

"In my case, there were other reasons." Mr. Sanders began to see a trace of humor in the situation. "I haven't been driven into hiding on account of my fame, as you so kindly term it, but by the narrow-mindedness of the police authorities."

"Oh, I know they put you out of business. You don't say that they won't let you stay at home?"

"That is unfortunately the case."

"Well, I'll be switched! That ain't right. I didn't know. I supposed you went back to your house to live after the papers got through with you. They don't say much now, you know."

"I'm afraid they would, however, if they knew I was here. I rely on your discretion, Mr. Lamberton." Peter Sanders felt reassured: perhaps this strange person might prove friendly, after all.

"You can trust me, all right, all right. Why, I wouldn't give you away for the world, Mr. Sanders. I've never had a chance to see much of people who've made a name for themselves, and I'm pleased to have had this talk with you. I hope you don't mind my butting in. I couldn't stand it any longer; I had to know."

Mr. Sanders was disarmed. An odd fish, this was, but an ally not to be disdained, in all the circumstances. "I can see that you must have found my case puzzling," he said. "I'm very glad, on the other hand, that you don't think I'm a dangerous person to have in the building. It would have been pretty hard on me if you had thought so—with a memory for faces like yours."

"Don't you worry." Lamberton rose, chuckling with importance. "I guess I can keep a secret as well as the next one. Men in my position find out things, I can tell you! But it don't matter to the owners what we find out, does it, as long as the rent comes in regular and there's no damage or scandal?"

"I suppose not. I'm sure that the house is safe in your hands." Mr. Sanders extended his hand. "Won't you come in again, Mr. Lamberton, and cheer me up? I sometimes get rather lonely."

"Sure, I will. Let me know if you need anything to make the place comfortable." With a wide smile of satisfaction at his famous tenant's affability, the superintendent departed.

This visit was the beginning of an acquaintance that furnished Peter Sanders with one of his few distrac-

tions during the winter months. In default of better company, he was rather pleased whenever the gawky and self-important superintendent honored him with a visit. After all, Lamberton's comments on the section of the world that he held in view were sometimes shrewd, and frequently amusing. He was an up-state man transplanted to New York, who surveyed the metropolis with eager curiosity and easily awakened suspicion. He found romance in the newspaper record of every day, and in his imagination he lived excitingly, for he felt himself to be at the centre of great events. Anything might happen to him at any time in this big city, to which he had come when already past the malleable age. For example, to find himself on speaking terms with the most notorious gambler in the whole country didn't surprise him in the least; but it gave him the keenest satisfaction. That Peter Sanders was in hiding, and in his power, made the thing even more delightful. He would have gone almost any length to defend his tenant, and, as often as he thought it prudent, he basked in the presence of the great man. Mr. Sanders, for his part, could not help being affected by the tribute paid him. He did not approve of the attitude either in himself or in Lamberton, but he weakly succumbed to it. The genial atmosphere of admiration was pleasant, for he lived—and had grown numb—in a frosty world of self-reproach.

The only other being who broke the monotony of the weeks was, oddly enough, Mr. Grantly Peckham. Mr. Sanders had advised him, as his lawyer, that he had settled in New York for the winter and could be communicated with through Henry. This was immediately after he was comfortably established, with his books in order and his routine of life marked out. He had not written earlier, because he was a little afraid

lest the lawyer's arguments should upset his determination to have the winter in town, and send him off again into vagabondage. Mr. Peckham was difficult to withstand, as juries and referees and committees had been finding for thirty years. He was always perfectly sure of his ground, and so clever in the presentation of his case that he virtually annihilated opposition. Mr. Sanders felt sure that the attorney would strongly disapprove of his plan, and he wished to have the support of accomplished fact before he let himself in for discussion.

As the event proved, he was justified in waiting. Mr. Peckham's intervention came promptly and was vigorous. Heedless of everything save the necessity of getting his client out of New York at once, he whirled up to the apartment in the gathering dusk of a December day, and demanded an explanation.

"This is very imprudent of you, Mr. Sanders," he said, twitching his eye-glasses from his lean, ascetic face as he sat down. "You ought to have informed me before making any such move. Really, I cannot hold myself responsible for what may happen."

"I'm quite aware of that, and I shall be lenient with you." Peter Sanders felt exceedingly bored. He disliked argument, particularly when he was sure to be worsted. "If I'm arrested and sent up, I shall bear you no ill will, Mr. Peckham."

"But it is a manifest transgression of your agreement." The great lawyer perched his glasses on his thin, high-bridged nose again, and swept the room with a glance that at once administered reproof to Mr. Sanders and absorbed his surroundings. "You've made yourself very comfortable here, I must say."

"Oh, I'm very snug, though I should be more at my ease down-town. Are you never going to get round the district attorney for me?"

Across Grantly Peckham's devastated face there swept the shadow of annoyance. "He is an obstinate man, the district attorney, a very obstinate man. I had counted on his consenting to your quiet return this autumn, but for some reason or other I find him obdurate. That makes your present move even more imprudent, as you can see."

"I've returned very quietly indeed."

"That," said Mr. Peckham seriously, "is what I have come to talk about. I can neither countenance such rashness nor hope to manage your affairs if you persist in such folly. It is imperative that you hold to your bargain until I give the word."

"Bargain? I never made a bargain." Mr. Sanders, though no match for his counsellor in matters of legal decorum, held firmly to the letter of the fact. "I don't know what you may have told them; but as far as I'm concerned, I never did more than clear out while I could. You told me I had to."

"I did, and I am inclined to repeat the warning." Mr. Peckham grasped his *pince-nez* and pointed it accusingly. "I cannot answer for the consequences of your coming back like this. There was at least a tacit agreement, which you perfectly understood at the time."

Peter Sanders looked at him thoughtfully. "I grant that I did take the hint you gave me, with some understanding of what lay behind it. However, the situation has changed somewhat. For one thing, I am much more respectably housed than I used to be. I've made no motion to open my own house, you see, which is the essential point. Nobody could run a game here."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Peckham, scurrying away from the unpleasant topic of his client's former business. "But I fail to see how that affects the situation."

"Why, because even the prejudice of the district attorney ought to recognize the blamelessness of my present abode. I am grateful to have the stamp of your approval upon it."

"I assure you," returned Mr. Peckham testily, shaking his glasses, "that I don't approve your action in the slightest degree. The sooner you clear out of town, if I must speak plainly, the better."

"But, my dear sir, you do approve." Mr. Sanders's sleepy eyes had begun to open with amusement. For once, the attorney had dropped his guard. "Of course you approve! Did you ever come to see me in my own house, during all the years of our association in legal matters? We may as well be frank. Nothing would have induced you to set foot over my threshold, and quite properly. Yet you do me the honor of visiting me here at the first opportunity."

A faint smile played about Grantly Peckham's mouth. "I admit," he said, "that I felt less hesitancy about coming here than about meeting you in—in a more conspicuous residence. I didn't wish, as a matter of fact, to leave the errand to any one else. But the fact remains that the district attorney seems to be as implacable as you are bold. You make my position difficult."

"I don't like to think that. It's a simple case, after all. I got homesick for New York and decided to risk it. If I get caught, I shan't hold you responsible, of course, and I shan't expect you to defend me. You can be as ignorant as you please of the whole affair. As a matter of fact, I'm reasonably safe up here, and I shall do nothing rash to excite suspicion. If my neighbors ever think of me at all, they'll regard me as a doddering old man who over-indulges in books."

"You have, indeed, collected a considerable library

here. I have often wished that I might see what we may term your official library. Are these—may I ask—wholly—?” Mr. Peckham’s precise speech thawed into incoherence.

“Not at all.” Peter Sanders rose and stroked affectionately a set of books on a shelf close at hand. “I’ve had a good many things, that I care about particularly, brought up from my house. I don’t know how it has been accomplished: I’ve given the word to my servant, that’s all. He’s the soul of discretion. Still, I’ve bought a good deal within two years. Nothing else to do, you know.”

“Do you mind my looking about?” Like an inquisitive greyhound, Mr. Peckham got up and began to nose delicately along the bookcases. A new expression came into his faded blue eyes, a softer and more sympathetic look than his client had ever seen there before.

“Make perfectly free with everything, I beg of you.” In the way of the good bibliophile, Mr. Sanders stood aside and made no attempt to play showman.

A couple of minutes passed in silence while the two men wandered along the walls of the room. Grantly Peckham was the first to speak.

“I should like to have you see my books,” he said, looking backward over his shoulder. “I’ve long wanted to see yours. You know collecting is a hobby with me, too.”

Mr. Sanders laughed. “I know to my cost. More than once you’ve got hold of something I wanted, and on other occasions you’ve made me pay more than a book was worth.”

“I dare say.” Mr. Peckham’s tone was abstracted, for he had just taken a volume from its place and was tenderly opening it. “You’ve served me in the same

way. This Caxton, I see, was one that I hoped to get. I never knew before who took it away from me. I'm glad it fell into good hands."

"Thanks. It's a beautiful copy, isn't it?"

Mr. Peckham made no reply. He was absorbed in a rapid survey of the good things that stood temptingly on every shelf. As for Mr. Sanders, he was quite content to let his guest browse as he would. He was amused and edified. In all the years of his acquaintance with the man, he had never suspected him of this passion for books, or for anything except the intricacies of the law. He had always supposed that he added rarities to his library coldly, just as he met his clients. In the redoubtable offices of Peckham and Snyder, where they had met, it had never occurred to him to obtrude his personal tastes or to mention books at all. It was the more interesting, now, to find the legal machine displaying human weakness at the touch of old leather.

After some twenty minutes, Mr. Peckham turned about, gave a sigh, and looked at his watch.

"I must go at once," he said reluctantly. "I am scheduled to make an eloquent address in Carnegie Hall this evening, and I can't afford not to live up to my reputation—worse luck!"

Peter Sanders shrugged his shoulders. "Better luck than mine! I'm not permitted to live down to my reputation."

Poised as if to take flight, Mr. Peckham shot a glance at his client. "I understand," he said. "In one respect, however, you don't give the lie to popular opinion: you have been accused by your enemies of laying snares for the unwary, and you've enmeshed me. I planned to give ten minutes to the task of convicting you of egregious folly, and I've accomplished nothing in three-quarters of an hour except to be admirably entertained.

I congratulate you. Some day soon I'd like to take you out to my place in Westchester—I keep most of my things there. Will you come?"

"You are quite sure that I shouldn't—?" Peter Sanders hesitated. He was anxious not to get into a false position and, equally, not to embarrass the just discovered humanity of Grantly Peckham.

"No. I'm incapable of betraying you to the police." Mr. Peckham's lean face wrinkled sardonically. "Moreover, my family is in town, so that I'm quite alone with my books in winter when I get time to visit them. I fancy that both you and I have made discoveries this afternoon, Mr. Sanders. I shan't try to persuade you to leave New York, except to come out with me. I'll even defend you if you get into trouble—by advice, at least."

"Thank you. I shall be delighted to see your library." Mr. Sanders spoke with his usual grave courtesy. Then he raised his drooping eyelids and met the understanding gaze of the lawyer, as he said, twinkling: "May I add that I'm delighted to make your acquaintance? Somehow we've never met before."

It was a fortunate circumstance that a real friendship sprang up between the two men after this meeting. In the drab days of the tedious winter, when Peter Sanders looked from his windows to see only a wider desolation than that within his library and his own heart, he would have found the world vacuous indeed with the company of no one except Henry and Lambert. He came to hate his confinement more than he had previously hated his exile, and he was saved from desperation by the occasional visits of Mr. Peckham and the still more occasional excursions to the latter's country-place.

Grantly Peckham's library was, indeed, magnif-

icent in its kind: less carefully selected than Mr. Sanders's own, because it had been gathered by a man more engrossed in affairs, but superior in catholicity and size. Upon it the great lawyer had squandered as much money as was consistent with his desire to be respectably rated among millionaires, and he had been abetted for two decades by an intelligent librarian, who was an enthusiast. At first Peter Sanders was a little bewildered by it, and inclined to wonder whether it was not better suited to an institution than to an individual; but he soon came to feel the fascination of the varied collections that it included. He did not wish to enlarge his own field, but he appreciated the advantages of his friend's wider scope. Yet his ironic temper was a little amused sometimes by the reflection that it was the ascetic counsellor of great corporations who let himself go so exuberantly over his hobby, while the disreputable gambler kept chastely to the rigid ideal of supreme excellence in a few departments.

In Westchester and in Mr. Sanders's apartment, the new friends passed a good many pleasant hours in the course of the winter—hours profitable to both. As the intimacy ripened, not only books but other matters came up for discussion between them. Grantly Peckham, though a representative of organized society, was not unappreciative of the observations that Mr. Sanders had made upon life as outlaw and exile, and he freely acknowledged his interest.

A brief fragment only from one of their later conversations need be reported, to show the drift of their relationship.

"So you consider me an accessory after the fact in all your misdoings, do you, Sanders?" Mr. Peckham asked, twisting his mouth awry.

"I should hesitate about going so far as that." Peter

Sanders smiled gravely. "I've never inquired how you spent the sums I paid over to you during the years when I was in business; but I take it the money went where it would do the most good. I've no defence to make for my own conduct, that's all, and I was upheld in it by your protection."

"I've never offered a bribe or violated the ethics of my profession—unless indirectly. I admit that I've served as the intermediary through whom you've been blackmailed."

"It comes to the same thing."

"Not precisely. Yet I'm glad that both of us are out of it."

Mr. Sanders shrugged his heavy shoulders. "Out of it. I'm not! I'm an outlaw whom you, in the kindness of your heart, visit by stealth. I'm taking my medicine, I suppose, but I don't like the length of the treatment."

"We must see what representations to the authorities will do. If they could only hear you lecture on ethics, I'm sure they would regard you as safe. You ought to have a clean bill of health."

"Oh, I shall never get that—from public opinion. I know all about it now. Until the day of my death I shall remain—don't you see?—simply Peter Sanders."

This life-sentence was deliberate. Whatever else it shows, it indicates that the edge of Mr. Sanders's mind was never blunted by personal misadventures. The full realization of his destiny probably came to him, indeed, in the solitude of his winter on the Heights above the North River. There he accepted responsibility, finally, for the social piracy of his career. It is easy enough to lose one's character, but very hard to get rid of a well-deserved reputation.

CHAPTER IX

EXPERIENCE

IN WHICH MR. SANDERS GATHERS USEFUL INFORMATION

IN April, Peter Sanders was ready to make a new move. He could not see that Mr. Peckham was likely to succeed, for the present, in his efforts to placate the district attorney, and he was tired of his cloistered life in New York.

More to pass the time than with any hope of escape from himself, he took passage from New York to Plymouth. He wished to attend a book auction at Sotheby's on the 29th, but he had no plans beyond that. He was drifting, and the currents swept him to the other hemisphere. He escaped reporters, when he boarded the *Sardonic*, by the expedient of having his name entered on the passenger-list as P. Smith, Esq. In view of the fact that he was supposed to be anywhere save in New York, he preferred to travel incognito. Aboard ship he avoided publicity by keeping to his very comfortable stateroom on the promenade-deck and well forward, or to his chair in a sheltered spot close by, where Henry could unobtrusively make him quite unrecognizable with two rugs and a woollen cap.

During the first two days at sea, however, Mr. Sanders did not need to avoid inquisitive fellow passengers by studied seclusion, for he was a bad sailor. When he ventured on deck, the third morning, he was still too miserable to care whether he was recognized or not. Revived by the sun-filled atmosphere, and accustomed at length to the steady lope of the racing steamer, he

began, by afternoon, to watch with some interest the procession of promenaders. From his covert of rugs he could review the endless chain of chattering persons, which wound by as if impelled by the throbbing engines. Mr. Sanders was still a little bilious, and a little inclined to resent the superabundant health that was evident in the free gait of the carefully veiled women and in the reddening cheeks of the men. He wondered how they had the heart to ignore so completely the rise and fall of the deck; he himself felt so unnerved and miserable that their vigor seemed to him mere bravado.

Yet he liked to watch them, after all. He felt a queer happiness in being so near to them, even though he was doing his best to avoid recognition. He found, as was always the case on shipboard, an odd pleasure in making part of a company that, during several days, must suffer perforce the same fate as he. They were the comrades of Peter Sanders, though the majority of them would have done anything in their power to escape the possibility of such an infamy. That he knew, and he hated the thought of it. He wished to be upright, and he felt himself to be in all essentials the equal in virtue of these people of good repute who had their friends and their expectations of friends, their freedom to come and go without restriction in the circles of which they formed a part. Although the cynicism of experience made him sure that most of them had guilty secrets of their own, he was frankly envious both of their animated health and their companionships.

One young woman he observed with especial interest. For an hour and more she passed and repassed his chair at regular intervals. She did not bounce along, like so many of the women; she was quietly dressed, slender, and dark; she was a welcome relief to a critical eye that disapproved of all Jews and of most representa-

tives of other races. She seemed to be more than twenty, though the upper limit of her possible age he could not guess. Possibly she was twenty-five, but she looked exceedingly young.

There would be no excuse, Mr. Sanders felt, for venting his misanthropic scorn upon this girl. He could not imagine her to be the guardian of any family skeleton or the prey of any improper desires. He would like to talk to her if he were well enough to talk. He wondered who she was and where she came from. Every time she cut the lines of the railing in front of his chair, he opened his pursy eyes a little, though he lay quiet all the while with the deathlike stillness of the sea-sick. She had for him the charm of real refinement and evident respectability. With her rapid, even step, her eager face bent seaward half the time, as if she were some wild thing with kinship to the deep, she seemed to Peter Sanders the embodiment of romance and youth.

The afternoon was waning, and the chill of the North Atlantic began to penetrate his covers. He suspected that they were going to run into fog. "The damned siren will keep me awake all night," he reflected, and grunted two or three times to mark his emergence from his day-dreams. "Sanders, you're a fool!" he said to himself. "That girl wouldn't talk to you if we were shipwrecked on a desert island, and you know it." He welcomed the coming of his valet.

"Shall I help you in, sir?" asked Henry. "The first gong has rung."

Reclining in his luxurious stateroom, Mr. Sanders ate his dinner of recovery. After many hours of sleep, he woke, the next morning, quite rehabilitated and able to enjoy the clean sunlight of mid-ocean. He took an early breakfast in his own room, for he had no mind to

expose himself to the people and the stuffiness below, or to the service of any one less skilful than Henry. He liked his breakfast, and afterwards, while the deck was still comparatively deserted, he took a walk. It was about the middle of the morning when Henry brought him, with a cup of bouillon specially prepared, his opera-glasses.

"Excuse me, Mr. Sanders," said the man, "but there's a rather large steamer approaching off the starboard bow. I thought it might amuse you to look at her as she passes, sir."

"Thanks, Henry," replied Mr. Sanders, sipping the bouillon. "It will be highly exciting. Perhaps you think I'd better try a game of shuffleboard, too, or turn a few handsprings, to avoid *ennui*."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Henry, in a tone from which even his faultless breeding was unable to keep a trace of injury, "but I thought, as you'd been in bed so long, sir——"

"My manners might have been improved by affliction. You are quite right. As you imply, I'm a beast. As a matter of fact, I shall be glad to look at the steamer. The sight of another place of torment similar to my own will help me bear up—two Topsyies, two little Evas, two hells. You're never ill, Henry, so you can't appreciate the difficulty of being both sea-sick and polite. You may take the cup now."

Assisted by Henry, who forthwith disappeared, Mr. Sanders rose. Mechanically he adjusted the glasses and, steadying himself by the rail, gazed at a small passenger-steamer, which trailed a line of dirty smoke not far off to starboard. He was profoundly uninterested, but felt that courtesy to his valet demanded a show of concern. One did not have so excellent a servant with impunity.

He had just decided that it made no difference to what blanked line the steamer belonged—it looked even more disgusting than the *Sardonic*—when he was startled by a rather sharp voice, which was evidently addressing him.

"I beg your pardon. Can you tell me what she is?"

He turned, and recognized with amazement the girl he had watched, the previous afternoon. She stood, quite unabashed, awaiting his answer. He was unable to conceal his embarrassment, and both blushed and stammered.

"I'm—I'm very sorry—not to be able to tell you. W-would you look? My eyes are not what they were."

She accepted the glasses readily, with a word of thanks. While she stood gazing at the boat, which was now amidships, she gave him an excellent opportunity to observe her. He liked her even better at close range and motionless than he had, the day before. She was trim and admirably clothed; she carried herself well; her small features were cut for beauty no less than for intelligence. He liked the upward flash of her dark eyes as she returned the glasses.

"I can't make it out, either. The funnels are red and black, but she's not a Cunarder."

"Perhaps I could find one of the officers," suggested Mr. Sanders tentatively. He had recovered his self-possession and with it his ordinary courteous suavity of manner.

"It doesn't matter, really—it was the idlest impulse that made me ask you. Please don't bother. I had no right to trouble you with my question, and it isn't precisely good manners to be talking with you, of course."

"It is a great pleasure to me, I assure you," said

Mr. Sanders, with quiet gravity. "I was feeling rather lonely."

"Then you have no friends aboard?" The young lady made her speech half comment and half question. "That must be rather stupid. I'm not overwhelmed with acquaintances, myself. I know two old ladies and the elderly banker who sits next me at table, but I'm with my aunt."

"You are more fortunate than I," he answered. "I suppose you're never lonely."

She laughed. "Ought I to be? You see how easily I scrape acquaintance when I wish. But ordinarily, I assure you, I'm much more conventional than this."

"I am the more honored by the exception," said Mr. Sanders with a bow. "But isn't it perhaps dangerous to make exceptions, particularly on an Atlantic liner? You see, I'm an old fellow and don't precisely know the limits of convention nowadays."

"I deserve the reproof," she answered, smiling at him frankly, "but I think you're paying me an undeserved compliment in supposing that I need to be chaperoned every minute. One doesn't go through college quite for nothing; one gains, at least, the confident belief of the world in one's ability to look out for oneself."

"But you're not—" Mr. Sanders did not conceal his genuine surprise. "I've never had the pleasure before of talking with so learned a lady, at least not to my certain knowledge. I'm not even a college graduate myself, but that was a mistake."

"A mistake?"

"In the arrangements of nature. I ought to have gone to college. I should have had a more interesting life."

"But you must have done interesting things. That's

a perfectly conventional thing to say"—she spoke protestingly—"only I mean it."

"Oh, business is, I suppose, always business," answered Mr. Sanders, with a curious shrug of his fat shoulders.

"But big deals, and that sort of thing? You've surely made them, or—or you wouldn't be travelling with a man-servant. I saw him leave you just now." She ended with a laugh and, crossing her arms on the railing, looked up at him little-girl fashion.

"Yes," he admitted doubtfully, "I've been in some pretty big deals; I've managed some of them. But they don't interest me. I'd rather have your knowledge than my experience."

"How absurd!" she exclaimed. "Have you still to discover that experience, not knowledge, is what one goes to college for nowadays?"

He gasped. In spite of Jonas Clapp's revelations, the previous summer, he found it hard to credit this frank avowal. Some colleges must be different—colleges for women. The utilitarian spirit couldn't have invaded them. "Not to get learning?" he stammered. "Girls as well as boys? What kind of experience?"

"Oh, of life!" She made merry over his evident bewilderment. "They don't know anything about life, and most of their professors don't either, so they all learn from one another. It's extraordinarily simple. Don't you see?"

"I see," said Mr. Sanders, "that you are making fun of me, which is very wrong of you. Please remember that I'm an old man who hasn't been to college and so hasn't any experience of life. And don't forget that I've never talked with a lady who had a college education, before I met you."

"But you haven't met me!" she responded, a little

uneasily. "I don't know why I go on talking with you like this—except that it amuses me. Seriously, you must have had a great deal of experience with people."

"With some kinds. But mostly with men." He had somehow the feeling that he was being pushed by her innocence to the verge of damaging revelations. What would the aunt say if she knew that her niece had fallen into conversation with the notorious Peter Sanders? He couldn't help feeling responsible for the reputation of the young creature who was so carelessly talking with him. He wondered, with bitter irony, why the officers didn't post a warning against gamblers in the ladies' cabin as well as in the smoking-room. He caught only the end of the girl's next remark.

"—so much better worth while. Men who can talk at all always have something to say."

"I'm afraid you flatter us," he replied. "At least, most men can't talk at all, and most women can talk always. Do you happen to remember Juvenal's wicked description?"

*Cedunt grammatici, vincuntur rhetores, omnis
Turba tacet . . . verborum tanta cadit vis."*

"I'm sorry to say I don't," said the girl, opening her eyes very wide. "I don't even know what it means, but perhaps that's an advantage."

"It means," returned Mr. Sanders, with a grave face, "that no gentleman ever questions anything a woman says. That is why it is wicked."

"I don't believe I do understand," she said, looking very much puzzled. "I suppose, like all my kind, I still have the superstition of academic training. We don't know Latin, and we're surprised when we hear a gentleman quote it, but we're more surprised if he says that he never took a college degree."

"On your own showing? You see, I didn't go to college, so I may be permitted to know something—a very little—about books. I've had time."

"But you said you were in business."

"I was, but I'm very idle now. I cumber the ground, and sometimes read. By the way, you can't have been through college long." He felt that he was very bold, but he had the excuse of her questions to him.

"Oh, almost a year," she answered. "I got my degree last June."

"Not quite so long as I've been through with business. So I've had more time than you to grow wise, only I don't know how very well. There ought to be a new kind of college for old men with nothing to do but improve their minds."

"What an amusing idea!" The young lady laughed, but a little doubtfully. "What would they teach?"

"Lessons in the conduct and associations of life, I suppose. I've just thought of the plan. Nobody admitted under fifty-five. From what you tell me, I judge that a course in human experience would be the best incentive to the study of books. We'd teach experience, and in that way turn out finished scholars. The lecturers would be recent graduates of colleges, preferably of women's colleges, which would be very pleasant indeed for the old gentlemen who attended. Don't you think it a good idea in education?"

"I think you're making fun of *me* now," answered the young lady, "but I'm not sure that I have the right to object. One doesn't often have such a conversation as this." She bent forward and looked over the rail at the bubbling water, as she made the avowal, turning her head quite away from her companion.

He laughed. "One would suppose that you had led a very arid and unadventurous life," he said, "whereas

I'm sure you can't have got beyond chaperons without needing them."

"Life is very dull," she countered with the easy cynicism of the very young, but she blushed vividly.

"I usually find it so, but not this morning," said Mr. Sanders. "You are very exciting—to a recluse, anyhow."

"A recluse?" She was clever about leading the conversation away from herself.

"Every person in retirement is a recluse, *de facto*. A hermit doesn't need to have any of the virtues, you know, except the ability to hold his tongue. I'm not a very good hermit, I admit, but ordinarily I talk to no one except Henry—my man, I mean."

"And you find me more exciting than Henry? Is that a compliment, too?" She laughed in turn, having recovered her self-possession.

"That's the kind of compliment that recluses pay, yes. They're not clever people, or they wouldn't be hermits." He beamed, for he felt that he was acquitting himself very well.

She beamed also. "I stick to it that you're remarkably interesting to talk with. I'm going to do it another time if you'll let me. I must go back to my aunt now, or she'll think I've fallen overboard. I'm going to be unconventional again—I warn you, you see. My name is Paula Smith." She held out her hand. "What is yours?"

It was one of the few occasions in his life when Peter Sanders lost his wits. Miss Smith's sudden thrust broke down his guard. Unhesitatingly, unthinkingly, quite as though he had no scandalous past, he took her hand and answered: "I'm very glad to have met you at last." And he added the fatal name, Sanders.

He was panic-stricken, the moment he had uttered

the word. Where would she run to cover? Would she go trembling to her aunt or to the captain? She would certainly turn in flight from the horror of the revelation. He was so overwhelmed that he did not comprehend at first her actual behavior. She tightened her grasp of his hand momentarily and said, as she withdrew it: "We've had such a nice talk, Mr. Sanders! I'll see you again soon. Good-bye." The girl knew nothing about him and his evil reputation. He had not believed such innocence possible.

With a gay nod, she disappeared into a doorway down the deck, leaving Mr. Sanders much shaken and utterly at a loss to explain the encounter.

"What in h-heaven's name does it mean?" he murmured.

He was surprised, on entering his stateroom, to find Henry making ready to receive the luncheon-tray. He could scarcely believe that the morning had so far gone, but he had enjoyed himself. The pity was that the experience couldn't be repeated. Now that he had revealed his name, she would soon find out (and the whole ship-load as well) who he was. It was a wonder that she had not taken in the full enormity of the situation at once. He should see her again only at a distance. It was a pity, though he realized that he had no reason to expect anything else.

He was quite as much mystified by the young lady's conduct, moreover, as he was disgusted by his own awkwardness. He was not so witless as not to see that her first question had been merely an excuse for addressing him, but he was very far from fathoming why she wished the excuse. Though his experience of women was of the slightest, he was not so fatuous as to suppose himself in any way attractive to the boldest young person. He was almost an old man, he recognized,

and he was approaching both obesity and baldness. Besides, he could not fail to see that his young lady was, in every particular, a "nice" girl. Irreproachable as his own conduct towards the other sex had been throughout a sensational career, he had known for forty years the ear-marks of feminine impropriety. He was an elderly Galahad who could not be deceived by the most perfect counterfeit of virtue. He would take a thousand to one on this girl's being what she seemed; and she seemed to him a charming young lady, as interesting as she was pretty. In only one particular could he wish her different: her voice was unmodulated and, to his critical ear, rather shrill. That was part of her Americanism, he supposed. He had heard the kind of voice he liked in woman—he quoted Lear's phrase to himself, having learned it only recently—even though he had seldom talked with any one who used it. Otherwise she was perfect, a joy to all the senses and to the most delicate standards of taste.

What puzzled Peter Sanders was the difficulty, when you considered her admirable qualities, of finding any reasonable explanation for his conversation with her. Obviously she hadn't known who he was, else she would never have addressed him; just as clearly she was not the kind to speak to a stranger without excuse. She had not been interested in the steamer, and she couldn't have felt any interest in him. Between the two horns of this dilemma he was tossed uneasily all day long. He pondered the chances and spent himself in trying to work out a solution, just as many of his victims had in other days vainly attempted to find a "system" that should impoverish him. The odds were all against him now; he realized that he did not understand the workings of the game. At last he gave up the problem altogether, concluding that an inscrutable

Providence had given him an opportunity for which he should be thankful. It wouldn't be repeated.

He did not see Miss Smith again that day, even at a distance. If she walked, she walked on the other side of the ship. When Henry, after dinner, asked his master if he would go out again to see the moonlight on the water, he was astounded at the reply, which accompanied a whimsically melancholy shake of the head.

"No, Henry, it's no use, I fear. It has been the dark of the moon for me since midday."

"I beg pardon, sir?" said Henry.

"I refer to the disappearance of Diana," explained Mr. Sanders. "But you won't understand, I fear, since you've never taken the trouble to get up your mythological astronomy."

"Very good, sir," Henry answered, for there were things that he never tried to understand. "Then, I think, perhaps you'd better be got to bed, sir."

The following morning, Mr. Sanders sat reading, though not greatly absorbed, when he saw his Diana wandering aimlessly along the deck. To his astonishment, she nodded to him in the friendliest fashion as she approached. Some feeble aftermath of youthful pride made him dislike to get out of his chair in her immediate presence. He struggled wildly to release himself from his covers before she came up. It was not easy for a person so rotund as he to rise gracefully from a steamer-chair. With all his efforts, he was in the act of it, an inchoate mass of rugs and flesh, when she came opposite. She could not fail to notice the spectacle, but she gracefully showed her good breeding by ignoring it, and greeted him demurely.

"Do you feel like taking a turn, Mr. Sanders?" she inquired. "If you do, won't you join me?"

"If I may." He took his place at her side, greatly

wondering at his good luck and a little doubting the propriety of his conduct. It was awkward. He certainly didn't wish to make the girl conspicuous by exhibiting himself in company with her; but he couldn't in decency decline her invitation.

"My aunt is in her stateroom with a headache this morning," she volunteered. "I have been told that the kindest thing I can do is to stay away till lunch-time, so I should be particularly grateful to have some one talk to me."

"And I am particularly grateful to be humbly serviceable to you," he returned with heavy-handed gallantry.

"By the way," remarked Miss Smith, "I looked for your name in the list of passengers, and it seems not to be there. Have you noticed?"

"I confess I haven't seen the list," answered Mr. Sanders with an effort. "I'm a bad sailor, you see, and have my meals brought up here. They've probably made some mistake about my name. It's not uncommon." He was taking care not to repeat his blunder of the previous day.

"Perhaps they've set you down under my name," said the girl lightly. "There's a Mr. P. Smith aboard, who was assigned a seat at the table with us, but he hasn't come to the dining-room at all."

"Perhaps they have," he replied, glad to be furnished with so reasonable an explanation. "That would be odd, wouldn't it? I must look into the matter."

Both of them laughed, and the conversation drifted off through a discussion about errors in names and cases of secondary personality—about which Miss Smith was much better informed than her companion—to a variety of other topics of equal interest. Mr. Sanders forgot both his fears and his scruples, and kept in mind only his desire to make the girl so far reveal her tastes and

experiences that he might discover her reason for making friends with him. He had no difficulty in persuading her to tell what she knew of books and pictures: she gave her opinions frankly, expressing her preferences and dislikes without any trace of self-consciousness. Her reticence began only when the talk fell on themes that might betray her connections and personal life. She did not even reveal the name of her college, though references to it were frequent. Mr. Sanders was too fearful about overstepping the boundaries of decorum to question her; he had the instincts of a gentleman without the habit of talking with well-bred women. He learned that she preferred Rossetti to Byron, but he did not find out whether she had been reared in town or country. He had the impression, every time the conversation veered to himself, just as he had got it on the previous day, that he was being prodded a little to reveal his own experiences as well as his attitude to things in general. Though by no word or play of feature did she indicate that she had any suspicion of his identity with the Peter Sanders of shameful eminence, she seemed to think that he must have a fund of interesting stories at command.

He would have been glad to satisfy his companion's whim, except that he could think of few experiences that seemed proper to relate. If he told her how he succeeded in ousting Dick Harris from the control of plutocratic gambling, she would be shocked and go away, though the struggle had been exciting; if he sketched the most approved methods of fleecing young gentlemen of fortune, she would think him "horrid." His life and his craft seemed singularly ill fitted to be subjects of conversation with a delicately nurtured young woman. Besides, they didn't interest him in the least. He preferred to appear an elderly nonentity rather than a

celebrated rascal. She was too inexperienced, he felt sure, to make allowances.

It all came to a head, at length, as they halted in a sheltered, sunny corner behind the bridge, and sat down on the edge of some kind of glazed arrangement for light and ventilation.

"I wish," she said hesitatingly, "you would tell me—you said yesterday that you'd put through some big deals—which of them interested you most. My world is singularly lacking in chances for adventure, and I have to get romance at second hand."

Although she put it in this tentative fashion, a horrible suspicion shot through Mr. Sanders's mind that she might have guessed his guilty secret. It was, of course, absurd. She wouldn't have come back if she had divined. She was probing the sore quite innocently, and in the ruthless way that innocents have. He did not know how to reply without being impolite, and he needed all his experience of many years to keep from showing what he felt. He let his heavy eyes close till they were the merest slits, and made an answer that he recognized as inane.

"Romance, I suppose, is always what somebody else has. Certainly I'm as prosaic a person as ever was. Fat men like me don't have adventures."

"Fortune doesn't take account of the figure, does it?" she responded, smiling. "You admit that you've made a fortune, yet you are shy of instructing my ignorance about the strange ways of it. Nothing seems to me more romantic than making one's fortune."

"It's grubby while you're doing it," he replied. "All businesses are pretty much alike. You've got something, or you can make something, that other people want; and you sell as much as possible of it every day. That's the whole game."

"Not when you make deals, I should suppose—big deals," the girl suggested. "That must be much more thrilling."

"Not a bit less grubby, anyhow." He was evasive, and he chose his words carefully. "Chance plays a big part in it and—well—being willing to take advantage of the other fellow's disadvantages."

"It must be great fun, though," she said reflectively, clasping her knees with her hands, "to stake everything on a single moment, to plunge in, and hope to get out somehow."

Mr. Sanders shrugged his shoulders. "Only a fool does that, and he loses almost every time. He always loses in the end. The man wins who has calculated the chances most accurately and who squeezes hardest."

"You make it sound like a combination of mathematics and football," she remarked laughingly.

"That's not a bad description. I had a rather well-known—house before I retired, but I never stood to lose more than I could afford. And whenever a man got in my way, I kicked him out. Does that sound brutal?"

"A little, perhaps, but I suppose it was necessary." She seemed absorbed by his words, a picture of uncritical innocence.

"My business was like everybody's," he went on. "I had to do it or go under. Finally I had to quit—but that's another story. It hasn't been a romantic career, you see."

"That depends altogether on the circumstances, I should say: how you took chances and why you quit."

"Oh, I was forced out; I went under. The public didn't want what I had to offer any longer—or pretended not to. At any rate, they got rid of me." He ended with the air of having completely unbosomed himself, and he felt reasonably satisfied with his performance.

"Somebody kicked you out, do you mean? You got in somebody's way?" The young woman demanded an even more explicit statement. "Or did the business decline? I'm afraid you'll think me shockingly inquisitive, Mr. Sanders; but I'm really interested to learn how things go in a world from which I'm barred out. I like the element of chance—the gambling, I suppose it is. There are disadvantages about being a woman."

Mr. Sanders laughed easily. "In my opinion," he said, "you don't lose anything. You're not barred in, at any rate, as I've been for a good many years. As to the circumstances of my retirement, all I've said is true. The business did begin to go down-hill—at least, my business did; and I was forced out. I don't mean that other concerns don't go on. That's why I'm bitter about it, though I long ago ceased to feel any interest in the business. A man doesn't like to have his game blocked, that's all."

"Of course not," said the girl. "One understands that. But you make the whole thing sound dreadfully prosaic, somehow. Don't you think you're a little unkind to prick the bubble that I've blown? If no good business man really plays a gambling game, what am I going to do for romance in these days?" With a comical tilt of her little head, she looked up at her companion and sighed.

She made him feel that he had been awkward and truly unkind. Though she spoke of it lightly, he was persuaded that she suffered from the shattering of her foolish dream about business. He knew little about children, but this young creature seemed to him a child, really, in spite of her college degree; and, according to his code, the man was a brute who darkened the sky for a child, even momentarily.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Miss Smith," he said with sin-

cerity. "You've come to the wrong shop for romance, I'm afraid, but you may be sure that it exists and will find you out sometime. You deserve it, and I never have."

"Oh, I don't mean that!" she exclaimed with a sudden catch of the breath. "Not that at all! I want the romance that men are supposed to find in life, even if I can get it only at second hand." She laughed a little uneasily.

"As to that," he answered gravely, "I can't give you much information, you see."

For some seconds she did not speak, but looked at him questioningly. "I wonder," she said at last. "I should think there must be real romance—real adventure—in some things, even if not in what they call legitimate business. Take professional gambling, for instance. I should like to meet a real gambler and have him tell me about it."

Mr. Sanders pulled himself together with an effort. It seemed to him that his perturbation must be visible. Outwardly he remained calm, and managed to arrange a dry smile, as he shook his head. "You wouldn't like it when it came to the case in hand. You'd find the gambler vulgar and his adventures sordid."

"That's what people always say," she returned. "Personally, I don't see why a professional gambler shouldn't be a gentleman, for certainly many gentlemen gamble now and then. The professional does what everybody did in the old days, doesn't he? He's a sort of robber-baron—a little old-fashioned, but quite the real thing in gentlemen. And why is the excitement of the game more sordid than anything else? Your 'deals,' for instance?"

"Oh, I said they were grubby." Mr. Sanders felt himself caught. Ironical as the situation might be, it

had clearly become his duty to point out to the young lady the danger and wickedness of gambling; and it was impossible to indicate himself as a horrible example, though that would have been his most effective line of argument. He had never lacked courage, as even his enemies admitted. Forced into the odd rôle, he accepted the duties of it without flinching. His chief difficulty was in finding something to say.

"You don't understand," he began, "or I don't believe you do, the difference between fighting in the open and fighting behind trees. I suppose the reason why the old buccaneers are romantic figures is just because they sailed up and scuttled ships by main strength. I must say I think modern war would be more decent if it weren't a perpetual ambush. The trouble with a lot of business, and even more with gambling, is just this: it isn't aboveboard. A man can't get much feeling of adventure about laying a trap for another fellow to fall into. At least, my own experience is that the game gets tiresome, though it's better than idleness. Besides, I give you my word of honor that I've never met more than two or three professional gamblers who were at all interesting. I don't explain very well, but I've had a good deal of experience."

"With gamblers?" questioned the girl. "How interesting!"

"Oh, any man meets a lot of queer people." The situation was getting too much for Mr. Sanders. He rose, feeling that in retreat lay his only safety. "In reality they weren't interesting at all," he said. "If you wish my advice—which I'm going to give, anyhow—I may say that you'd better avoid them. Not that they are likely to cross your path!"

She rose in turn. "I suppose not," she remarked laughingly, "but I wish one or two really good specimens

might. Your picture of them doesn't frighten me. I think—" she stopped and stood with her hands clasped behind her like a little girl—"I think they might be as nice as you are. I'm coming back to talk with you again. Good-bye for now."

She floated off down the deck, leaving Mr. Sanders to make his way thoughtfully to his stateroom. He shook his head a little as he went. It was a pity, he reflected, that so charming a young lady should be so deceived about life. Her college ought, at least, to have enabled her to distinguish between the tinsel of adventure and the real thing. Mad about meeting a gambler! Perhaps the sooner she discovered with whom she had been talking, the better it would be for her. That would shock her out of her foolish notions; she would understand then how little romance had to do with gambling, or gambling with romance. He chuckled at the thought that anybody could conceive of him as a figure of adventure. But he grew grave again at once. His business had been as good as anybody's, no doubt, but it had been sordid. As for the girl, it was to be hoped that some young man would fall in love with her soon, and woo her well. He almost wished that he were thirty years younger and a reputable citizen.

"Henry," he said, as he reclined on his sofa and took up a volume of Ferrero, "I have had a very exhausting conversation, and I need a drink. Scotch, please. Women are hard to understand."

"Yes, sir," answered the man imperturbably. "In a tall glass, I suppose, Mr. Sanders. I never did understand my wife, sir."

Mr. Sanders smiled and began to read, though he found that the face of Miss Smith sometimes obscured the lineaments of Julius Cæsar.

The afternoon and evening passed uneventfully.

Mr. Sanders kept to his stateroom, partly because he wished to avoid the temptation of again meeting Miss Smith, and partly because he was afraid that she might seek him out. Conscience and policy alike dictated the severest seclusion. He could not properly expose her further to danger from his society; and he was unwilling to run the risk of her scorn when she learned that he was a Mr. Sanders whom she must abhor, the Peter Sanders of diabolic fame. Luckily the voyage was nearing its end. He was to land the following afternoon. The incident was closed.

But Fortune, the goddess whom Peter Sanders had worshipped so long, spun her wheel once more. Faithless in all else, she did not neglect to take vengeance on her recreant votary. While the *Sardonic* was steaming up the Channel under clear skies and in a fresh land breeze, he left Henry to finish packing and stepped out on deck. It was two o'clock. The bustle of landing already pervaded the ship. In a couple of hours the *Sardonic* would discharge those of her passengers who were landing at Plymouth. As he caught the smell of earth again, and refreshed his eyes with the green and white of the sunlit coast, Mr. Sanders suddenly remembered that one obligation of the trip was not yet discharged: he certainly had not given Henry money to pay a very modest bill for the week's supply of wine and whiskey. He stepped back into his stateroom to consult the valet.

"I'm exceedingly sorry, Mr. Sanders, but I was going to attend to the matter as soon as I finished packing. I will go at once if you wish, sir."

"Never mind," answered Mr. Sanders. "You're busy here. I'll get a smoking-room steward to look out for it. That's the easiest way."

With a trace of self-consciousness, he entered the

smoking-room. He did not fail to notice that interested glances were cast in his direction by men whose appearance made clear their knowledge of Peter Sanders and all his ways. He feared a little that some old acquaintance might accost him. Quite brazenly, however, he made his inquiry. To his astonishment, the steward returned in a few minutes with the information that the purser had no bill against Mr. Smith.

"But he has!" exclaimed Peter Sanders, whose honesty had always been meticulous, even if warped. "I'll go down and see him, myself."

"Very good, sir," said the steward, pocketing a coin. "Thank you, sir. I'll show you his office."

So Mr. Sanders descended into depths that he had hitherto avoided, and confronted the twinkling blue eyes of a rubicund officer in a mahogany frame.

"You must be mistaken, I think, Mr. Smith," the purser said. "Your bill has been paid."

"But I tell you it hasn't," answered Mr. Sanders, who forgot gentle manners in the face of such invincible stupidity as this. "I haven't paid it, and my man hasn't; and I want to pay it now."

"I'm sorry to dispute you," returned the purser brusquely, "but you owe nothing. The bill was paid this morning. It's entered here: 'P. Smith, Stateroom 47.'"

"I must say your book-keeping seems to me rather shocking!" Mr. Sanders was now thoroughly annoyed. "I've never in my life had so much trouble about paying a bill. My room is 17, not 47."

"Huh!" grunted the purser, looking interested and consulting another document. "This is odd. I see! Two ladies have 47, and both of them are named Smith. One of them is Miss P. Smith. I'm very sorry indeed, sir; the bill must have been presented to her."

"What?" roared Mr. Sanders, enraged. "And she paid it? How much is it? I know the young lady. What a dreadful imposition!"

"It is very regrettable," said the officer, who looked seriously concerned. "The bill amounts to seventeen and six. I will apologize to Miss Smith personally and at once. Perhaps—eh—would you mind helping me explain, since the lady is a friend of yours? It's deucedly awkward, you know."

He appeared so much disturbed that Mr. Sanders had no choice but to lend his aid. Since he had been so foolish as to acknowledge himself a friend of Miss Smith's, he could not well explain that it would be inconvenient. He paid the bill, and unwillingly accompanied the officer. On the upper deck a stewardess was despatched, with the purser's apologies, to request the ladies in Stateroom 47 to grant him a moment's interview.

They emerged at once: Miss Smith and an older woman, who might have been her mother except that she was so obviously an unmarried aunt. They looked a little worried, and Miss Smith both blushed and started when she saw Mr. Sanders.

"I'm exceedingly sorry, Miss Smith," began the purser—"I never knew such a thing to happen before—but we have been so stupid as to have rendered you a bill that should have gone to this gentleman. In your haste you seem to have paid it without protest. I have the sum here—seventeen shillings, sixpence. Mr. Smith, as a friend of yours, has been good enough to come with me to help explain."

"Thank you," said Miss Smith weakly.

"Paula," put in the older woman with some heat, "what does it mean? Why didn't you tell me, instead of paying? What was it for?"

"For liquors, madam," said Mr. Sanders firmly. "It was merely a mistake, which I regret quite as much as any one."

"Yes—indeed, yes," protested the officer, placing the money in Miss Smith's hand, which closed over it mechanically. "I hope you will pardon me—it was a quite shocking blunder. And will you pardon me if I go back to my office now? Mr. Smith will tell you the circumstances, I'm sure. I am very busy."

He took the license of the occupied and hastily disappeared, leaving Mr. Sanders to cope with the disagreeable situation alone. It was grossly unfair to him, but he was helpless.

"Paula," continued the older lady inexorably, "I wish you would explain what this means. I wish you would say something."

"There isn't anything to say," the girl replied miserably. She was a picture of dejection.

"Then I wish you would introduce this gentleman," said her aunt, "since he seems to be an acquaintance of yours. Perhaps he will tell me what it all means."

Mr. Sanders felt that by all the laws of courtesy he must save Miss Smith from her embarrassment, but he also felt very inadequate.

"The mistake was due to the similarity of our names—a quite natural mistake, you see—" Under the aunt's disapproving gaze, he spoke with increasing confusion. "I mean, it was quite natural. You see, I'm Mr. Sanders, Mr. Peter Sanders."

In a flash, he realized with utter horror the thing he had done. He did not need the frozen look in the older lady's eye, the perceptible recoil of her body, to show him how he had blundered.

"What!" she exclaimed. "How dared you? Paula,

you will explain this instantly, or I shall cable to your father from Plymouth."

In the stress of the moment, Mr. Sanders found his wits again. His very disgust calmed him. He, whose nerves had stood the shock of a thousand turns of fate, had gone to pieces first before a maiden, and then before a maiden aunt! "I am the only one to blame," he said smoothly. "I am a lonely old man, and foolishly permitted your niece to talk with me on two occasions. I think she has taken no harm from it, but I apologize to you most abjectly. I had assumed the name P. Smith for the voyage; and they seem to have confused us in the purser's office. You need feel no further alarm."

"But Peter Sanders!" exclaimed the lady, whose distress made her forget even the most rudimentary manners. "Oh, Paula, how could you? What would your father and mother say?"

"I'm altogether to blame," repeated Mr. Sanders. "Miss Smith had no notion, of course, that she was talking with a person of—of my repute. Inadvertently I told her my true name. She did not even know that I was using the name Smith."

"But I did! I did!" cried the girl. "I knew all the time—I knew everything! I recognized you from your pictures as soon as I saw you on deck, and—and I asked the steward, when Mr. P. Smith didn't come to table. I wanted to see what you were like." She was on the verge of tears, but she turned bravely to her aunt. "It's I who ought to ask Mr. Sanders's pardon, and I do—most abjectly."

"I see," said Mr. Sanders gravely. He was too greatly astonished to say more.

"Oh, Paula!" ejaculated the older lady, utterly overcome.

"I thought it would be a lark," went on Miss Smith.

"I fancied you'd be a sort of civilized pirate. I didn't see how it could do any harm. In one way, you've been a great disappointment to me."

"What do you mean?" queried Mr. Sanders, in whom amazement and confusion began to give way to amusement. He had been played by this little girl—he who had measured himself successfully against the sharpest wits in America—as if he were a lad fresh from the country. He enjoyed the novelty of the situation.

"I expected you to be romantically wicked, I suppose," Miss Smith confessed shamefacedly.

"Oh, Paula!" exclaimed the aunt again. "But whatever possessed you to pay Mr. Sanders's bill? It is too dreadful!"

"Yes," answered her niece. "It is. I knew Mr. Sanders didn't know what I was up to; and when the bill came to me, I thought he would be still more mystified if I paid it. There never was such a little fool as I am!"

The aunt nodded. "That is quite true, quite true, my dear," she said.

Mr. Sanders smiled and turned to the older lady. "I can't quite agree with either of you, I'm afraid. Your niece's folly can't match mine, for I have cut myself off from everything I like best. But I hope you will at least allow me to shake her hand in parting. I shall have one pleasant recollection the more."

The girl looked up bravely and took his hand. "Please forgive me," she said. "It has been a great experience for me, anyhow."

"Good-bye," said Mr. Sanders. "Don't forget that all the newspapers have said about me is true. The devil is just as black as he is painted. You must never play with fire again—I warned you it was dangerous."

"I won't," returned Miss Smith, "but, all the same,

the portraits of you are frightfully over-done. Good-bye."

"I wish to shake hands, too," put in the aunt. "I think Paula must be right in what she says. "You're not what I should have expected. Good-bye, Mr. Sanders."

With a low bow Peter Sanders turned away. "Good Lord!" he muttered to himself. "What a mess the world is!"

CHAPTER X

REINSTATEMENT

IN WHICH NEW COUNTRY IS EXPLORED, FRIENDS ARE ENCOUNTERED, AND A TURN OF FORTUNE IS MYSTERIOUSLY ANNOUNCED

THE business that furnished an excuse to Peter Sanders for his journey to London kept him engaged for a little while only. It could have been managed just as well from New York, as a matter of fact, but it served his turn. It gave him justification for a perfectly idle move. He attended the sale for which he had come, and looked on while the dealers disposed of rare books to one another, rather well amused by their scrupulous pretence of conducting an open market. The spectacle of Sotheby's always captivated him. Thereafter, having arranged matters with his agent, he was left without even an excuse for being in London rather than elsewhere. Purchasing books had grown a simple matter since it had come to mean nothing more than the search for certain sets and odd volumes, to fill the gaps in a well-considered collection. It was still interesting, but it was not enough to occupy the time of a bibliophile exiled from his library.

Adrift on the world again, Mr. Sanders cast about for something to do, or at least make the motion of doing. There was no point in going back to New York, and no point in going anywhere else in the wide world. De-throned monarch of the Kingdom of Chance as he was, he was a man without a country. Precisely as he had earlier grown tired of living abroad, where his noisome

reputation bothered him less continuously, he had now wearied of living obscurely in America. He felt great relief in moving freely about London, and was inclined to stay in Europe until amnesty was granted him.

He canvassed various projects for the months ahead. For a moment he thought of going to Russia, to see for himself what the mysterious empire was like. He had wondered a good deal about Russia since his encounter at Monte Carlo with the philosophical young gambler from Poland. If Russians were like that young fellow, they would give him something new to think about. When it came to the point, however, he hesitated. He had had a great deal of time latterly to observe the outside of things, and he had come to the interesting, if not very profound, conclusion that one got little by such means. The hope to probe the deeps of the world and to come to an understanding of it, by a merry scamper over its surface, was a folly of the day, the temptation to which ought to be resisted by one who looked with sane and disillusioned eyes upon the complex riddle of humanity. What, for example, could Peter Sanders expect to gain in Russia, or in any other difficult land, that he could not find in books, save visual titillations after extreme fatigue? Even with a *courier*, even with the pedagogical assistance by which various "bureaus" sometimes sought to tempt him, he could get no real insight into the people of whom such a nation was composed. Travel in strange parts would not profit him.

Better a retreat into Devonshire and a refuge in the quiet ugliness of Mrs. Trotter's Rosetree Villa. There he could at least consume his own smoke without doing harm. Mrs. Trotter would attribute his querulous discontent, if she observed it, to the fact that he was a restless American, and Henry—well, Henry had to put up with him anyhow and anywhere.

Unfortunately, a letter to Mrs. Trotter elicited the news that her son had returned from Canada, and that she had given up her house to help him manage the farm he had taken. She was no longer renting rooms, though she highly recommended Mrs. Redshaw, an old neighbor. It would not be the same thing, however, as Mr. Sanders and Henry agreed. The latter remembered Mrs. Redshaw favorably, but he felt sure that they would not find the village so satisfactory without Mrs. Trotter. It is to be surmised that Henry was doubtful whether a gentleman who had tired of it once, most unreasonably, would be likely to settle down in peace on a second visit. He was so discouraging, in short, that Mr. Sanders relinquished the project and cast about for other possibilities. They were not easy to find, and some weeks drifted by quite aimlessly.

Henry had the notion that it would be well for them to rent a house somewhere in the country for a few months. Suitable little places, well furnished and properly built on gravel, were always in the market. One day in late June, he brought the matter to a head. Their stay in the Connecticut Valley, as he decorously urged, had been successful except for the little misunderstanding about names; and there would be no difficulty about organizing a temporary household. Indeed, as he developed the plan, Henry warmed to the idea and grew almost enthusiastic.

"Since you've mentioned our experiences of last summer," observed Mr. Sanders, "I may as well recall that we had to clear out just as soon as people discovered that the wicked Peter Sanders was about. Even my good friend Corson didn't advise me to remain."

"Oh, yes, sir," said Henry, looking up from the engrossing task of putting studs in a fresh shirt, "but that

was different, wasn't it? Over here, I'm sure, people wouldn't know about all that."

Mr. Sanders shrugged his heavy shoulders. "Perhaps not, though I've got to the point of feeling that I may be as widely famous as P. T. Barnum or Theodore Roosevelt. The other day, a fellow who looked like a disinherited son of John Bull himself, followed me into the hotel and offered me a full partnership in a scheme—I don't quite remember what, but I think to remove the gilt from the cross on Saint Paul's. Somebody like that might turn up in the country."

"But he wouldn't, Mr. Sanders—not if we selected a proper neighborhood. Besides, he wouldn't know any of the gentry, sir, and so he couldn't tell stories about you."

"H-m-m." Mr. Sanders snorted. "No, Henry, it wouldn't do. From what I've read of English country life, I feel sure that the neighbors wouldn't look at me till they had made investigations into my history; and afterwards they'd ride me out of the county—well, in a refrigerator. I might ostentatiously live like a toad, of course, but I should be afraid of being discovered, all the same, and of becoming a blot on your lovely landscape. No houses for me, Henry."

"But only for the summer, Mr. Sanders? I'm sure you're over-sensitive, sir."

"Or cursed with ingrowing egotism, eh? Possibly. People don't stare at me in the streets as they do at the King, of course; but I'll tell you what I discovered yesterday. There was a copy of the *Daily Sale* wrapped around a package of books I was undoing, and it had a sketch of my career, with a picture and the statement that I was now in England. If they're letting up on me at home, as I hope, they're beginning to find me out over here."

Henry looked grieved, and finished his little round of duties in silence.

The next day, however, he returned to the subject with a new suggestion in mind. He was shaving Mr. Sanders at the moment.

"I've been thinking, sir, that you might do some motoring. The weather is fine now."

"U-m-m-m."

"In going about from place to place like that, there'd be no question of neighbors, would there?"

"U-m-m-m."

"I was talking last night with a man who has just come back from the North, which gave me the idea, sir."

"U-m-m-m."

"With a little care, Mr. Sanders, I fancy we could select a list of hotels with decent food, though of course that is a drawback, as you might say."

"U-m-m-m."

"I'm sure, sir, it would be better than staying on here in town, which you don't like. And if you found it tedious after a bit, there'd be nothing to prevent your dismissing the car at once, would there?"

Just here Mr. Sanders, who had been fidgeting with impatience, took advantage of Henry's momentary pause to put a keener edge on the razor, and tore the towel from beneath his chin. "Confound it!" he mumbled, as he wiped the lather from his lips. "I never knew you to do anything so inconsiderate as this, Henry. How can I answer you when my mouth is plastered with soap, and you're scraping within quarter of an inch of my life?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir! Indeed, I beg your pardon." In his penitent concern Henry almost dropped his razor, while into his eyes came the look of dog-like devotion that he wore only when he was troubled about

his master. "I was—thinking what you could do, and I quite forgot myself."

"Do get me shaved, and we'll talk about it."

"I won't be a minute now."

As soon as he could safely speak, Mr. Sanders took up the topic. "Excuse my snapping. I dare say your plan is as good as any, only the truth is that I don't very much care about going anywhere or seeing anything. In my time I've visited the cathedrals and the ruins, and I've had a look at some of the stately homes. As a motion I detest motoring, and I'm not keen for the places one could get to."

"Have you seen the Lakes, sir?"

"Poets' country? Yes. Sacred cottages and manicured ponds! I prefer to keep my literature in my library, thanks." Mr. Sanders's tone was disgusted.

"Yes, sir. I didn't know it was like that, you see." Henry's voice had an unusual quality of personal regret.

From the shelter of the towel with which he was wiping his face, Mr. Sanders eyed the man. "Why?" he asked. "Have you any interest in the Lake District?"

"Oh, no, sir. At least, that is to say, I had always supposed that the Lakes were very beautiful. I read some account of them when I was a boy, which is, no doubt, where I got such an impression. But naturally you wouldn't wish——"

"Wish? Of course I wish." Mr. Sanders's temper was not smooth that morning. "Good heavens, Henry! Haven't you trailed me about for more than two years without once saying that you'd like to see anything for yourself? Why shouldn't we go to the Lakes? I might just as well be there or in hell, for all the good I do."

Thus it came about, through accident rather than design, that Peter Sanders motored to the North, alone

in the tonneau of a vast touring-car, with Henry beside the chauffeur. The cockney driver was supercilious at the start, having had the lives of American pilgrims in charge before; but by the end of the first day's run he had learned humility, and before they reached Keswick he was as decent a man as Henry could make him. Mr. Sanders found little to amuse him along the road, but he watched the education of Higgins with delight. This was Henry's expedition, and nothing mattered but Henry's pleasure.

As a matter of fact, Henry seemed to find more enjoyment in teaching the chauffeur good manners than in observing the scenery or in noticing objects of historic interest. At Keswick Mr. Sanders rallied him mildly on his apparent indifference to the sights for which he had cherished a lifelong desire.

"Here they are, all about us, Henry: hallowed Helvellyn, sacred Skiddaw, and the rest of them; but I haven't heard you utter a single exclamation. I'm disappointed."

Henry looked troubled. "Oh, sir, I assure you, Mr. Sanders, that I'm very grateful to see them—very grateful indeed. But I couldn't let the chauffeur think you were doing this for me, could I? You and I may understand, but I should be afraid he would take advantage. He hasn't been well trained, sir."

"Then you do like the country?"

"Yes, indeed, sir. It's not so grand as what we've seen elsewhere, but it's—I don't know how to say it, Mr. Sanders—it's more comfortable."

"That's good." Mr. Sanders beamed. In his queer way Henry was perhaps getting what they had come for. "What are you going to do with me next?"

"Of course that's for you to say, sir. I've been looking at maps and making some inquiries, and I've won-

dered whether you've ever been on the other side of the hills—where people go less often. There's said to be a very good inn over near Crummock Water, where you could at least lunch, sir."

"Very well. We'll go to-morrow."

The morning proved to be unusually fine, and the run westward along Bassenthwaite was pleasant. From Cockermouth they turned south and followed a road that wound into the heart of the hills. There, on a slope above a little stream, was the inn: quite out of the reach of trippers and wholly peaceful. It was a long, low, white cottage merely, with roses clambering above the door; but even its modest exterior had an air of trim comfort. Inside, the comfort was realized, expressed at first sight in marvellous cleanliness and glowing fires.

"Henry," said Mr. Sanders, "if the luncheon is as good as the rest of it, I think we could manage to stay here for a few days. This looks to me like an uncommonly good place."

"Yes, sir," Henry answered, "and you need be in no fear about the food, Mr. Sanders. I've already been through the offices and seen the cook at work. I'll go back to Keswick at once, if you wish, and bring on the luggage."

Peter Sanders laughed. "Better wait till the pudding is eaten, I think. However, you'd better prepare to make the trip."

The dining-room was quite empty when Mr. Sanders entered, and he sat down at the long table, feeling so much at home that he wondered whether he had suddenly become the head of a large household, most of the members of which were casually absent. The effect of things was like that. The luncheon, moreover, was excellent; it might almost have been ordered by Henry. His sense of proprietorship was so strong, indeed, that

when two ladies entered the room, he instinctively rose to welcome them.

Recollecting himself, he was about to sit down again in some confusion, when he heard his name spoken. It was a clear young voice, obviously of American origin.

"How do you do, Mr. Sanders?"

"Bless me! It is Miss Smith." He hurried round the end of the table and grasped the friendly hand of the young woman who had occasioned him so much trouble on the *Sardonic*, a few weeks earlier. In spite of his warning to her when they said good-bye, and his subsequent avoidance of her in the tender at Plymouth, he could not help feeling pleased at the encounter. He hoped that the spinsterish aunt, with whom he shook hands deferentially, wouldn't be too annoyed by the meeting.

Paula Smith's dark eyes danced with fun. "How wonderful of you to get here!" she said. "Are you staying, or are you simply lunching? We are accustomed to having people drop in for lunch, but otherwise we share the house with a couple of perfectly silent and usually invisible honeymooners."

"I had hoped to stay for a little." Mr. Sanders lifted a pair of troubled eyes. "But perhaps your aunt——"

The elder Miss Smith gazed at him candidly. "Really, Mr. Sanders, we haven't engaged the whole house. Out of the world here, what does it matter whether——whether——"

"Whether you would care to receive me at home?" Mr. Sanders completed the phrase without embarrassment. "That's very kind of you, Miss Smith. I won't intrude, I assure you, or make myself a nuisance. Have you been here for some time, may I ask?"

"Oh, Aunt Paula always comes," the niece answered. "It's a habit with her. The place is one of her discov-

eries, and she has to spend at least two weeks here every summer. This is the first time she has brought me, and we're to have another fortnight of it. There's a great deal to do."

"That is pleasant to hear. I should have supposed it very quiet, which was my reason for wishing to stop. But I'm bothering you already by delaying your luncheon."

"Paula and I like walking," said the aunt, when they were seated. "There's nothing else to do except look at scenery."

"Quite wonderful, in its way, the view I got up the lake as we came along," murmured Mr. Sanders.

"Isn't it!" cried Miss Paula enthusiastically. "That's the Great Gable that you see right ahead of you. Did you know?"

"I haven't yet learned the topography. Possibly you and your niece will some day tell me what to look at," Mr. Sanders said, pointedly addressing the elder woman. He rose, for he had really lingered over his meal as long as seemed politic.

"We shall be very glad to tell you what to see." The older Miss Smith smiled pleasantly, though she seemed a little nervous.

"This is a queer go," muttered Peter Sanders to himself, as he lighted his cigar before a cheerful fire. "Why shouldn't one believe in chance? Unless the Almighty loads the dice!" He chuckled. It was very satisfactory to have these compatriots in the hotel, and still more so to have them feeling his presence there not insupportable.

During the following days, he had reason to be even more grateful for the absurd stroke of luck by which the acquaintance had been renewed. He was shy at first, and avoided the ladies absolutely except when he

chanced to meet them in the dining-room. He felt that it would not be the thing for two unprotected women to associate with an old reprobate like himself, however kind they might be about overlooking his reputation. Soon, however, he was led into conversations that had to be finished in one of the cosy public rooms at the front of the house, which were virtually private sitting-rooms. From these talks to strolls outside, and thence to brief expeditions in the motor-car, the gradations were easy. The inn had charms, but it did not have to work its spell unassisted. The Smiths were largely responsible for Mr. Sanders's enjoyment of his retreat. By the end of a week, he was on such terms with them that he had forgotten his scruples, and was busily conniving with Henry to find ways of amusing them.

To his surprise, it was the aunt instead of the niece whom he was coming to know rather well. Paula bubbled over with girlish enthusiasm, but she suffered eclipse in comparison with Miss Smith, whose charms were revealed only through acquaintance. The aunt, though she lacked the beauty of youth, talked extremely well, as Peter Sanders delightedly found. He had never before been on an easy footing with a gentlewoman of ripened understanding, and he was captivated by the experience. He discovered that it was not at all hard to talk to her; and without reserve he revealed his experiences and his tastes, making, it must be recorded, quite as favorable an impression on her as she was making on him. After all, the experience was as novel for her as for him. She was wholly fair about it, too, and talked freely of herself. She told him about her family, about her travels and her reading—all the main facts of her uneventful forty-five years. She had always lived in Chicago, it seemed, but latterly she had travelled a great deal. Occasionally their conversations were car-

ried on without the assistance of the younger Miss Smith, who professed to find them frivolous children on whom she couldn't waste all her time.

One afternoon, when they had come in from motoring and had been having tea together, Paula excused herself almost at once. She had to get off some letters, she said.

"I wish she would bring that young man to time!" said the aunt petulantly, as soon as the door was closed.

"How could any young man need stimulating?" asked Mr. Sanders, smiling. "Can it be that the youth of Chicago have no eyes?"

"Making eyes is hardly enough, is it?" Miss Smith frowned. "They've been doing that ever since my niece was seventeen."

"I can believe it, but I don't see—being perfectly inexperienced in such matters—why you should worry."

Miss Smith laughed constrainedly. "No doubt I shouldn't, and, clearly, I shouldn't be burdening you with my fears. I suppose"—she hesitated—"I'm only anxious lest her life go for nothing, like mine."

"But you—surely—" Peter Sanders was wholly unprepared for such an outburst, especially from Miss Smith, who was jolly and companionable in spite of her superficial primness. Personal talk with ladies was still new to him, and it frightened him a little. He was painfully aware of not knowing the game.

"Oh, I! Now that I've been mentioned, I may as well say that I'm an absolutely useless person from every point of view. I've money enough to live on, but not enough to use for anybody else; I've mind enough to keep out of an institution, but not enough to make me valuable in any way; and my character is—well, you're rapidly learning my character, Mr. Sanders."

"I have yet to reach any unfavorable conclusions

about it," said Mr. Sanders. "It strikes me that you're decidedly unjust to yourself. Here you are now, for instance, giving your niece a good time and, at the moment, being kind to a social pariah whose only merit is gratitude."

"That's very pretty, but it isn't of consequence." Miss Smith smiled vaguely, then frowned again. "You were complaining yesterday that you had to live like a nomad. Well, that's practically my life, too. I keep in motion for the sake of forgetting how perfectly useless I am, and I never do forget. I ought to have married, and I'm afraid Paula is going to repeat my mistake."

Mr. Sanders was silent for a moment. He felt uneasy to discuss the good lady's errors with her, and he could think of nothing whatever to say. At length his human curiosity came to his rescue. "Then there is a young man?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, there's a young man. More than that I don't know. I'm not in their confidence. I don't even know whether he has proposed, but I'm sure he would if she decided he was going to."

"From my own experience with the young lady," said Mr. Sanders reflectively, "that seems to me inevitable. What you say interests me extremely. I can't see why he doesn't do it, anyhow. Is he, perhaps, unable to support her? I have understood that the world has changed—that marriage doesn't nowadays enable two young persons to live on half as much as it takes for them to live separately."

"Support her!" Miss Smith spoke with fine scorn. "Why, the boy is going to be one of the richest men in Chicago. He's a nice fellow, too. You would recognize the name if I told you who he is."

Mr. Sanders twisted about in his low wicker chair and looked straight at her. "My acquaintance with

Chicago is extremely limited," he said, "so probably I shouldn't recognize the name at all. Your circle and mine don't have much in common, you know."

Miss Smith laughed. "Oh, there are some names so famous that everybody knows them. Aren't there? Yours, for example."

"Is nationally execrated, I believe. Quite so. I'm beginning to feel, however, that our country doesn't discriminate very well among the people it curses. Some of the rich men who are hated probably don't deserve it so much as I do, though I'm not really rich at all."

"Oh, please forgive me, Mr. Sanders," put in Miss Smith penitently. "You know I didn't mean to twit you with what is, after all, your misfortune—not your fault. We're often terribly unjust to people we've never met, aren't we? But your name is widely known."

"I dare say it is. The point being, I suppose, that I should know something about the father of the young man interested in Miss Paula, if delicacy permitted you to name him. Perhaps I should. As a matter of fact, I happen to be acquainted with just one young man in Chicago who would answer your description. Wouldn't it be curious if we had the same one in mind?"

"Very curious," replied Miss Smith, rising. "Would you recommend your young man for Paula?"

"I should think both of them very fortunate if they—" In the struggle to rise from his very low chair, he avoided the necessity of phrasing his thought completely. Once on his legs, he began afresh. "My young man is a good sort, even if I do happen to know him. To be sure, I didn't think so at one time."

"Perhaps," suggested Miss Smith, as she moved towards the door, "you could tell me his name, even though I can't very well tell you whom I have in mind."

"There's no reason why I shouldn't," Mr. Sanders replied, quite content to draw his own conclusions from her reaction to the name. "He is Gresham Clapp. Do you happen to know him?"

"Oh, yes. Everybody knows the Clapps. Your description of Gresham is quite correct, I should think. He has been rather wild, I'm afraid, but I've always thought him a nice-mannered boy. You've been very good to us this afternoon, Mr. Sanders. Thank you so much!"

After she had gone, Peter Sanders seated himself again and poked the fire rudely. "Done!" he murmured aloud. "She didn't give it away, after all." At the same time, he couldn't help hoping that it was young Gresham who was interested in Miss Paula. He liked both children, and he felt a ridiculous thrill of excitement in the possibility that the cross-currents of chance had brought him into sight of a romance involving the two of them. Only, if Gresham Clapp was the man, why didn't he follow up the girl more seriously? He had confessed to an attachment months and months ago, and he wasn't the kind to be easily balked about anything on which he had set his heart. The problem was too much for an outsider like Peter Sanders—especially as he might be on a wrong scent.

A couple of days later, his attention was distracted from the affair by the arrival of two momentous letters. They came by the American mail: one from Grantly Peckham and one from James Garmany. The information they conveyed was unexpected. It was, in brief, that the ban against his living in New York had at last been lifted. That was the central fact, swallowing up for the moment all minor considerations and all other interests. Without danger of prosecution, he could return to his own house and live there openly. He was reinstated as a citizen of his own country.

At first the intelligence was staggering. A hope delayed becomes more unreal than something that has always remained on the very horizon of desire. Mr. Sanders found it hard to believe that the district attorney had relented, that there wasn't some mistake. Had not Peckham's statement been confirmed by Garmany's, he might have been inclined to doubt the reality of the good news. In the face of the two, however, he could not be sceptical; he could only look at the letters in a dazed way, and wonder how it had happened. Both of them were brief and guarded, but in their different styles they expressed the same thing. He read them again:

MY DEAR SANDERS:

I have recently had the opportunity, on two or three occasions, of talking about your affairs with a gentleman who is in the position to know the mind of the municipal authorities, and I have reached the conclusion that you need have no fear of active prosecution, should you in the future wish to return to New York. I need not say that it would be necessary for you to live in the quietest and most retired fashion possible, for I think this would meet your views. You will understand that I am telling you this on my own personal responsibility, without official warrant for doing so, but I feel sure that you can act upon the advice in security.

Yours sincerely,

GRANTLY PECKHAM.

DEAR PETER:

This is hoping to see you again before long. Yours truly is up early when the birds sing, and there's little that escapes me. Don't be in a hurry but come when convenient. Things is opening up for you, which is as much as to say you won't be railroaded if you live quiet. I thought you'd like to know what I've been hearing lately.

Yours truly,

JAMES GARMANY.

There could be no question about it. He could go back to New York presently without fear—his days of vagabondage were ended. As soon as the reality of this

was established, he permitted himself to rejoice. He felt like a boy setting off for the circus or some other supernal delight. He would have danced if he had at all known how, and he began immediately to plan how he should employ his days as soon as he got home. Above all, he wished to tell some one about it at once—Henry, preferably. Where could Henry be? He had slipped off after delivering the letters. He ought to be on hand, confound him! How pleased the fellow would be!

In a few minutes, as it happened, Henry appeared, busy about some trivial matter of service. He carried, indeed, a pair of well-polished boots.

"Henry!" cried Mr. Sanders. "What do you think has happened? They've let up on me. I can go back."

"Back, Mr. Sanders?"

"To New York, you idiot, to live! They tell me it's safe to go back to my own house."

"Yes, sir. And when shall you wish to be starting, sir?"

"Starting? How do I know? I'm in no hurry to start. The important thing is that I can go home to live. Don't you see?"

"Oh, yes, sir. You will be much more comfortable in your own house, I'm sure, Mr. Sanders."

Peter Sanders shook his head disgustedly. "Don't you care?" he asked. Henry couldn't be depended on to show decent human feeling. Yet he must care.

"Indeed, I'm very glad that you are to go, sir," Henry responded, without a shade of expression on his rigorously shaven face.

"All right." Mr. Sanders took up a book, though he would have been incapable of reading a page under the stress of his excitement. "I'm quite comfortable here, so you needn't think of packing up at present."

"Very good, Mr. Sanders."

When the unruffled Henry had gone, bearing the boots, Peter Sanders threw his book aside, got up from his chair, and swore profanely. He was galled out of reason by his valet's phlegmatic acceptance of the new situation. It clouded his hour of joy. How could a man, who had followed him faithfully through all the phases of his adversity, take the new posture of affairs so much as a matter of course? It was all very well to be calmly adequate, but there was a point where stoicism ceased to be a virtue. One might as well live with a wooden image as with Henry.

He had to find some outlet for his feeling, however. He had been wet-blanketed by Henry, and he couldn't hope to see the Smiths till luncheon. He would walk over to Crummock Water and follow the road along the lake until he had regained composure. It wouldn't do to get over-excited about a concession that was a mere matter of right. He had always expected, he told himself, that the district attorney would come round after a little.

Thus chastening his spirits, he went into the next room to put on his boots. He wouldn't call his man, whom he didn't wish to see; he would find a pair of boots for himself. To his surprise, he discovered Henry in the bedroom, standing stiffly before one of the windows. To his greater amazement, Henry did not turn round at once when his employer entered.

"I think I'll go for a stroll," said Mr. Sanders, ill-humoredly. "If you don't mind, I'd like a pair of boots."

"Yes, sir." The fellow's voice was strangely husky, and for a moment still he did not turn.

When he did, his face was at once red and mottled, and the stiff lines of it were oddly distorted, as if some

sudden process of decomposition had set in. A great light dawned on Peter Sanders. He crossed the room and seized Henry's limp but unresisting hand.

"It's pretty good news for us, isn't it?" he said gravely. "You've done a lot for me, Henry. You know it, and I know it. You've pulled me through, and I'm grateful. We understand each other, and we don't need to talk about it. You're a good man."

"The—the brown boots?" asked Henry.

At luncheon Mr. Sanders communicated his good news to the Misses Smith, who were less restrained in their congratulations than Henry.

"Don't exaggerate it, please," said Mr. Sanders at length. "I shan't be welcomed in New York, after all, with a brass band. There will be no public reception. I shall sneak home like a whipped dog and keep as quiet as possible. The smirch won't be removed from my name, you know, by the fact that nobody is going to try to jail me."

"It will make a difference, all the same," Paula Smith answered. "After a little, you can go in for philanthropy or something of that kind, and in five years people will think of you only as that delightful Mr. Sanders who has had such a picturesque past."

Peter Sanders smiled appreciatively. "I wish I could think so," he said, "but that could happen only in romantic fiction. What people will really say, of course, is that I'm a poor old wreck who escaped prison by a fluke. It isn't pretty—reality."

The elder Miss Smith looked troubled. "Oh, Mr. Sanders—!" she exclaimed.

"Pardon me," Mr. Sanders interrupted, feeling that he had been heavy-handed. "I'm not saying that they will be right. I suspect that my friend, the district attorney, would have had great difficulty in getting a

judgment against me, which is probably why he let me alone. The truth is that I don't much care, now that I can go home and stay there unmolested. I shall be glad to be quiet."

"I'm glad they've quit pestering you. That's something," announced the younger woman in her downright way. "And some time or other I mean to see your library."

Peter Sanders bowed. "I shall be honored," he said quite gravely.

"By the way"—Paula Smith blushed and hesitated for a moment before she went on—"we're going back to America next week, Mr. Sanders."

"So soon?" Mr. Sanders made no attempt to conceal his surprise. "I took it that you were going to stay over here all summer."

"We were." The aunt brought it out rather sharply. "I shouldn't go back, as far as I'm concerned, until October. But Paula—well, Paula is restless and thinks she must get home."

"I hope that nothing untoward has happened," said Mr. Sanders, turning to the girl. Although he couldn't tell why, he suspected that she had received a letter that morning, as well as he.

"No, nothing whatever has happened," she answered bravely, though she still blushed. "I'm merely qualifying as a woman by being whimsical, that's all, and Aunt Paula is qualifying as a self-denying aunt. She is the one to suffer, poor thing!"

"If I'm the only one who suffers, I shan't complain," Miss Smith remarked.

"I hope nobody is going to suffer very much," said Miss Paula. "I don't intend to."

Miss Smith fidgeted. "Who ever intends to suffer?" she asked. "All the same, Mr. Sanders, if I had my

way, the affairs of young people would be regulated altogether by their parents. I don't go back on women, but I don't believe in what are called their rights. Since they never know what they want, why should they be put to the trouble of making decisions? Let people who do know decide for them."

Peter Sanders felt himself floundering. He could neither accept nor reject the generalizations, not having formulated the whole duty of woman in his own mind. He was grateful that Miss Paula relieved him from the necessity of replying.

"I think it is you who are qualifying as a woman now, Aunt Paula," she said. "It's rather hard to see what all this has got to do with going back to America."

At this point the honeymooning couple entered the room glumly, and sat down to a silent meal. The others fell silent, too, oppressed by the weight of gloom diffused by the married pair. Mr. Sanders wondered, while he ate gooseberry tart, what their effect on Miss Paula was likely to be. He had strongly the impression that she was going back to America to settle the fate of her young man, and he couldn't get away from the quite unsubstantiated notion that the young man was Gresham Clapp. Jumbled with speculations of this sort, there went through his mind like a refrain the thought that he himself was free to come and go as he pleased—to go back to New York or to stay abroad—a free man at last.

Later, when he was alone, he had time to reduce his thoughts to good order, but he found it hard to do so. He was dazed by the turn his own affairs had taken, and a good deal bothered by the practical aspects of the case. He would have liked to know, for example, the source of Peckham's information and also how soon he might with propriety settle down at home. He felt

eager to go, but he was restrained by the sense that he must, for policy's sake, move slowly. Both Peckham and Garmany warned him against hurrying. Perhaps, before he went, the district attorney had to be allowed time to recover from the shock of changing his mind; and perhaps everybody wished him to slip into town quietly while the authorities pretended to wink. He was quite satisfied, in any case, if only he was to be let alone. He would leave the district attorney to his own conscience, and the business of providing amusement for the very rich to men younger than himself who were not yet weary of the game. Meanwhile, he could decide at his leisure about going home. Cumberland suited him and suited Henry, while the cockney chauffeur no longer had opinions of his own—Henry had seen to that.

When the Smiths said good-bye, a couple of days later, he had no information to give them about his plans. He could only tell them that he hoped to be in America for the winter, which did very well as a programme. By delicate tact he helped them evade the question of a possible reunion, feeling quite sure that the parting was final. His only concession to the future was a private request to the aunt that she let him know whether Miss Paula accepted the young man. Miss Smith smiled and promised.

He missed them when they were gone, but he was not dissatisfied. Young love bloomed about him, in successive crops, through the season, for the inn was frequented chiefly by the newly married; and the lovers left him in the solitude that he did not resent, now that it was only a probation before his re-entrance on the scene of his former activities. He had much to think over, and he could dream in peace of happy days ahead when he need not stir from his books except to keep himself in health. He would set himself to study as

he had never been able to do before, digest thoroughly the contents of the books of which he had previously got only a smattering, become perhaps an adept in some little corner of knowledge. At sixty Peter Sanders had visions of becoming a scholar, though in a modest way. Besides, it would be pleasant to talk over old times occasionally with a circle of friends who would understand and sympathize without requiring apologies. That would be restful.

Still, there was no need of haste; there was plenty of time. He lingered in Cumberland; he motored in Scotland; he put in three weeks or so in London before he judged it prudent to sail for home. Indeed, it is probable that he would have delayed still longer in England, had Henry not begun to grow restive and to urge the wisdom of crossing before winter set in. Henry was tactful about it but, after his laconic fashion, rather stubborn. It was, as a matter of fact, October when Mr. Sanders landed in New York and again took up the threads of life behind the ingenious and well-oiled door of his own house.

CHAPTER XI

OCCUPATION

IN WHICH MR. SANDERS DISCOVERS AN ANALOGY AND LOSES
A CHANCE

BEFORE a wide-topped mahogany desk in his library, Peter Sanders sat reading court scandals of Henry the Second's reign. He enjoyed the savor of them. He had found life—most of it—very like the picture that old Walter Map gave in his pages of gossip and credulous narrative. To be sure, he failed to see how so shrewd a person as Map could have believed the prodigies related in the book; but he recognized a kindred spirit in the man who had jotted down these anecdotes with sardonic humor, eight centuries before. As he sat with his head resting on one pudgy hand, Mr. Sanders found himself wondering why he did not write a similar book out of his own experiences. He had long been an enthusiastic admirer of Walter Map, but he saw no prospect of using his knowledge of the author save by way of imitation. A book like the one he could make would have a great success, he felt sure—would be the literary sensation of its year. It would not lack scandalous advertisement. He might call it *Trifles of the Tables*, which would correspond closely enough to the original, *De Nugis Curialium*, and yet mark the difference of materials. He smiled at the notion.

On further reflection, he recognized that he could never bring himself actually to publish his memoirs. The renewed notoriety would be too appalling. He knew that his book would sell on sight, and he wished

to be forgotten rather than remembered by the world. All the same, he might indulge his humor by writing the volume, even though it never saw the light. It would give him something to do. He needed occupation.

After his long exile, Mr. Sanders had for a month been back in this book-lined room, living once more in the house from which the representatives of law and order had ousted him as their triumphal ending of a long campaign for the suppression of gambling. He had been the greatest of gamblers, and he had suffered the severest of penalties. Now that everything was over, he owed the authorities no grudge for their abrupt termination of his business career: he had come to feel too acutely the disadvantages under which its long continuance had placed him. Besides, he had acquired by much solitary thinking certain oddly matched principles of conduct. He was sorry that he had not made his fortune another way, and he was always thankful nowadays that, at least, he was no longer victimizing the public by games of chance. What he still resented in the treatment he had received was his long exclusion from his own house. That, he regarded as unjust. He had, perhaps, been more bitter about it, these last weeks, than ever before.

For a time he had enjoyed the thought of settling down into old ways. He had been quite happy while he superintended the business of arranging his library to accommodate his later purchases beside the treasures that he had accumulated before his exile. He had felt a novel pleasure in looking forward to an indefinite number of quiet months and years amid the possessions that were his closest bond with earth. Very soon, however, he had realized, as he walked through spacious drawing-rooms from which every trace of their former use had vanished, that he needed more than his own

roof above his own belongings to make him happy. Sanders's occupation was gone, and with it had disappeared (by the malevolence of the district attorney) the habit of a permanent domicile. He found himself aggrieved, disappointed, and, as always, too much at leisure.

Had he not shrunk from exposing his notorious personality to public discussion once more, he would have laid aside Walter Map and begun to set down his recollections without further ado—from sheer boredom. As it was, knowing that he would be unwilling to publish what he might write, he merely played with the notion while he turned the pages of his Latin book and refreshed his memory of this anecdote or that. He thought, however, that he might write his volume some day, and he believed that it would be a far more perfect mirror of his times than was Map's, though he had no reason to suppose that he could express his cynical humor with such terse exactness as the Archdeacon of Oxford.

He fell to wondering how he should begin; how he could parallel Map's elaborate comparison of the King's court with the classical Inferno. "Eadem est curia, sed mutata sunt membra," he read, turning to the opening pages of his model. That would serve him as a motto, at all events. "The gull is always a gull, though his name changes," he might translate it. Yes, he would some time set down his *Trifles of the Tables*, if only to demonstrate to himself conclusively the tedious and unprofitable nature of life. He knew what it was like, and he could prove it. In spite of Walter Map and several thousand other writers, in spite of his own projected volume and the spacious luxury of a library in which the glint of the fire played on much deep-toned mahogany, in spite of wealth in securities and experience, Peter Sanders was bored.

As he glanced about the room to focus his disapproval upon concrete objects, he noticed the quiet entrance of Henry, who had uncomplainingly added the task of running a large house with a small staff of servants to his other duties. Mr. Sanders reflected, following out his line of thought, that Henry was, perhaps, the one experience in life surpassing expectations. Unconsciously he smiled.

"What have you got for me to do now, Henry?" he asked. "You can't need another vacuum cleaner to-day, and it would be unreasonable of you to make me buy any more labor-saving devices for the laundry till next week. I sometimes wonder whether you're not a Socialist in disguise."

"Indeed, sir—" protested Henry in shocked tones. "But you must have your joke, Mr. Sanders. I am to say that Mr. Garmany is below and would like to see you if you are at liberty."

"Show him up," answered Mr. Sanders, brightening. "And, Henry, do you remember what Mr. Garmany's is? It's been a long while since he was here."

"Oh, yes, sir; I recall perfectly," said Henry, withdrawing with discreet and silent step.

Mr. Sanders rose and walked to the fireplace, plunging his hands, as he went, into the pockets of his velvet jacket. He smiled with the pleasurable excitement of again meeting Garmany, whom he had not seen for more than two years. He liked Garmany, and he trusted him as much as he did most men.

The two greeted each other with the warmth of old comrades. Garmany was, so Mr. Sanders noticed, a good deal heavier than formerly, both in face and figure. He carried himself, however, with the same magnificence as of old. Evidently he was still proud of his looks.

Ensnconced in great lounging-chairs before the fire, with Henry at call to look after their comfort, they soon began to pick up the broken threads of their friendship. They had much to tell and much to hear. Neither one spoke rapidly. Mr. Garmany, in ponderous bass, boomed replies to Mr. Sanders's good-natured ironies. They were in no haste to draw their reunion to a close. The evening was long, or could be extended indefinitely, for their health was relatively good and they were foot-loose.

"You've become a famous globe-trotter latterly, as I understand," said Mr. Garmany. "It must be a fine thing to be seein' all parts of the world. I've never got farther than the old sod of Ireland, myself, not to speak of England, which I wouldn't. I refuse to recognize the island of the oppressors as existin', save for my tailor in London, who is three parts Irish."

"I've had more travel than I could stomach," returned Mr. Sanders with a rather bitter laugh, "though I haven't gone so far afield. I never want to leave New York again—unless to go to Greenwood. They couldn't keep me out of my place there after I once got in."

Mr. Garmany shook his head solemnly. "Sanders," he said, "it ain't right for a man to talk like that. You're no older than me. This business must have soured you."

"I suppose it has. There wasn't anything for me to do but travel, you see—and pick up books."

"You've certainly got a lot of them—more than you used to have." Mr. Garmany swept the room with an inclusive gesture. "I don't suppose any man in New York has a finer collection of them, has he, now? And you readin' them as you do! It was a shame to keep you from them."

"They're nothing to brag about, Jim, but I like them.

I suppose I'm a little proud of them, really. But what good are they to me, after all?"

Mr. Garmany raised a bejewelled hand and waved it solemnly at his companion. "Books ain't life, Sanders," he said. "They're like lobster and champagne—very good, indeed, of an evenin', but give me beefsteak for breakfast. I've read some, myself."

Peter Sanders laughed. "I fancy you've suffered more from champagne than books, Garmany, taking your life through. Now, haven't you?"

"In the way of business, perhaps I have," admitted Mr. Garmany, "though you'll remember that I've never moved in the circles of the Four Hundred, like yourself. All the wine that ever flowed in my district I had to uncork, myself, if my memory is correct. You've had both champagne and books in your life, Sanders, and look where I find you, sittin' here in your rags and needin' medicine for your stomach. Ah, Peter, my boy, it's a sad spectacle to a decent man like me!" He transferred his cigar to the other side of his mouth with a skill born of long practice, and tilted it up to emphasize his jest, though his clear blue eyes gave no hint of a smile.

"I'm thinking of writing a book," said Mr. Sanders, amused and not unwilling to hear his friend's views.

"Don't you do it, Sanders. Take my advice. That would make one more, and you've too many now. Besides, what a man like you needs is work."

"I thought it would give me occupation," Mr. Sanders put in tentatively, "whether I got it printed or not."

"What a man like you needs is work," repeated Mr. Garmany, ignoring him. "You're used to it, and you ought to have it. Now that you've had your vacation, you ought to be gettin' into harness again. If you don't, you'll soon find yourself sufferin' from senile decay, or

whatever it is they call it when fine men go to the junk-heap in the flower of their age."

"My retirement wasn't exactly my own arrangement, you know," said Mr. Sanders, allowing a shade of irony to creep into his voice. "I didn't close up till I had to. But now I've got nothing to do—even here—unless I write a book about my experiences."

"'Twould be a great hit, no doubt," Mr. Garmany answered imperturbably. "I'd put money into it. But 'twould get done; and then where'd you be? You'd be after havin' to write another. Business keeps you goin'. Here's to business!" He raised his glass, but set it down again when he looked at his friend.

Mr. Sanders's eyes were glowing within the slits to which he had narrowed the lids. "I wish to heaven you'd tell me of one single thing I could do," he said. He was genuinely interested, though a little irritated at the nonchalance with which his affairs were being treated.

"I see you mean it," returned Mr. Garmany. "I've only to look at you to be sure of that, Peter, my boy. When you make yourself look like a tom-cat after a mouse, your friends always know somethin's goin' to get done—somethin' or somebody. If I hadn't graduated from the mouse class some time ago, I should be afraid it was me. But I'm only tellin' you the truth. You ought to go into business again."

"That's all ended," Mr. Sanders remarked quietly, "and you know it. I'd not go back to it if I could, if you want to know."

Mr. Garmany removed his cigar and smiled appreciatively. "That's the difference between us," he said. "I would, but I can't, either. So it's all one in the end. But look at me! You speak as if there was only one way for a man to make an honest livin'. As a

matter of fact, I've made more money since I retired, as they call it, than I ever did before."

"That's good," put in Mr. Sanders. His face relaxed. He liked Garmany more than ever, and he was glad to hear of his prosperity. "What have you been doing, if you don't mind telling me?"

"Mind it? It's what I'm busy doin' here and now. I've chiefly been developin' my own properties—real estate—with a flier or two in mines, though the last is rather a source of expense—like books—and not to be indulged in except on Sundays and the Fourth of July." Mr. Garmany expanded with good humor.

"I don't happen to own real estate," Mr. Sanders remarked dryly. "I've never had your opportunities, you must remember, Jim, for knowing how the city would grow; so what money I have is safely tucked away in bonds and other paper. I can't develop my house advantageously, you know."

"And a very good thing it is, such paper, to have in the family," said Mr. Garmany, nodding approval and ignoring the gibe. "But I've not stuck to New York. Do you not own land elsewhere, yourself?"

Mr. Sanders's face suddenly took on a look of grim amusement. He remembered that he was, indeed, possessed of one parcel of real estate. He still had title to the acres that Gresham Clapp had unloaded on him. "I do happen to have one such investment," he said. "No matter how I got it. The story would interest you, but you can't have it. I may say that I bought it unexpectedly, but I don't look for much interest on the money I put in. It's wild land, I believe."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Mr. Garmany. "Develop it!"

"It's swamp land in Florida," Mr. Sanders explained. He felt disinclined to pursue the subject.

"'Twould be the better for development," continued Mr. Garmany oracularly. "You'd encourage the growth of tropical fruits and alligators, which is a noble work, and you'd preserve your youth."

Mr. Sanders fell silent, wrapped in his own thoughts. For a minute or two, his friend eyed him. Then he rose.

"Havin' prescribed your medicine, I'd best be gettin' home and let it work," he remarked. "We're both busy men, remember, and mustn't be talkin' through half the night."

"It was good of you to come to see me, Jim," said Peter Sanders. "I feel more at home for having had a talk with you. I've been intending for a fortnight to look you up. I dare say you are right—I need work!"

"Of course you do," returned Mr. Garmany. "Haven't I been sayin' as much? I'll drop in and nurse you when I can. Good-bye."

With a hearty hand-clasp and a laugh they separated. After resigning his visitor to the conduct of Henry, Mr. Sanders returned to his deep chair.

The reflections that followed him to bed that night haunted him through the whole of the next day. He recognized the soundness of Garmany's advice: he needed work, and work measurably similar to the kind of activity to which he had been accustomed all his life. He might play with books, even play with the notion of writing one, but he had been moulded into the kind of person who had to deal with men and things, when it came to real labor. He could be happier in doing business (or in doing his fellow man, he observed to himself sardonically) than in any other way. To be sure, he saw only too clearly the analogy between the method of exchange by which he had enriched himself and the methods employed in some other profitable enterprises, and he disliked the thought of again soiling his hands

with the grime of the market-place. Yet he suspected that Garmany was right. He knew that he was right. Perhaps the mire that he hated was necessary to his health and happiness. Perhaps his violations of abstract justice were finding their punishment in just this state of affairs. It gave him grim amusement to think of himself as a soul so far damned as to have created his own vexatious, but not quite insupportable, private hell. He might put all this into his book! All the same, he must find some kind of real occupation.

On the second morning, when he came down to his simple breakfast in an over-elaborate dining-room, he found, as usual, a little pile of letters beside his plate. Two or three—perfunctory business communications—he read and put aside. Then he took up one that sorted curiously with his recent meditations. It was written on paper headed “The Harmsleigh Realty Company,” and it ran thus:

DEAR SIR:

I learn that you are the owner of a tract of land in southern Florida, adjoining the property held by the company of which I am president. We are planning a scheme of development down there which may interest you. I think it quite possible you may agree with me that the two properties could be advantageously managed in co-operation, particularly as I am led to suppose that you have not yet commenced improvements on your land. In any case I should be glad, with your permission, and at any time suiting your convenience, to call upon you and explain our plan. When you understand what we have in mind, you may care to join forces with us, which I think would be profitable to you as well as to us.

Yours respectfully,

RICHARD B. HARMSLEIGH.

Mr. Sanders snorted, but read the letter a second time. So some people thought there was money to be

made in the Everglades, after all. He was sceptical about it. Gresham Clapp had investigated the region and had not been impressed by its possibilities—except as a means of paying off old scores. The rascal! Even for that purpose the land wasn't of much use, apparently, since the young man's conscience had determined him to refund the money he had made from the swindle. Mr. Sanders wondered whether he would really insist on doing so, as he had promised, or whether he would never find it convenient. It didn't matter, of course. They had had the thing out between them and were now on the friendliest footing. It would be amusing, by the way, if it turned out that Gresham was in love with Paula Smith. The aunt had agreed to write. That might affect the situation. Certainly he wouldn't like to have the boy wreck any affair of his own, by delaying things until he had paid that wretched ten thousand, if that was what was the matter. But about this man—what was the name?—Harmsleigh. There could be no harm in seeing him. He couldn't believe that any improvements could transform acres of semi-tropical swamp into useful land, but he might as well let the fellow talk about his proposition. He couldn't suffer anything worse than an hour of boredom, and he was frequently bored with less excuse.

After leisurely consideration of the matter while he took a turn in the Park, Mr. Sanders wrote a note to Mr. Harmsleigh, making an appointment for the afternoon of the following day. When he had despatched it, he set about arranging a belated consignment of books that had somehow failed to turn up with the rest. Absorbed by the pleasant task, he quite forgot, for the remainder of the day, to lament his lack of occupation. The next morning, when he remembered the engagement, he was almost sorry he had made it, so slight was

his inclination to seek an outlet for his energies in the Everglades of Florida.

He was able, however, when Mr. Harmsleigh arrived punctually at the hour set, to greet him with proper courtesy. He didn't mind talking with the man. Moreover, he soon found that something of the glow of Mr. Harmsleigh's own enthusiasm was being communicated to himself. He recognized the danger of such an attitude of mind and put himself on guard, observing his caller through wary lids but saying little.

Mr. Harmsleigh was a youngish man with an earnest face, hair so carefully brushed that it gave the impression of being permanently arranged, and a severe simplicity of dress. He appeared to have but two ideas in life: the astonishing fertility of the Everglades, and his personal duty to put their teeming wealth within the reach of persons whom he called narrow-chested bookkeepers and unsuccessful professional men. He seemed immensely interested in the welfare of bookkeepers and professional men, particularly if they were narrow-chested and unsuccessful. When he opened his wide mouth, a pentecostal stream of words issued from it quite without effort. When, for a moment, he stopped speaking, the silence was oratorically impressive.

"There, Mr. Sanders," he said at length, "I've told you what the Everglades are like and what the future of the region is to be. I congratulate you, sir, on holding the magnificent tract of God's earth that is yours. I have told you nothing but what I have seen and am to see. I have visited the country; I know it, I may say, like a—eh—like the palm of my hand." He spread out a lean hand in confirmation of his words.

"Very interesting, what you tell me," murmured Mr. Sanders. "I've never had your opportunities, and I wasn't aware that the tract I own was so valuable."

"Its potentialities are enormous," declared Mr. Harmsleigh. "I should think shame to myself if I tried to conceal them from you. But I am doing nothing of the kind. I am talking business, for I want you to join forces with us. Together we can fill the region with enthusiastic and successful orange-growers—men who might, except for us, waste their whole lives at desks in the devouring city."

"Just how do I come in?" inquired Mr. Sanders mildly. "Your letter didn't make it quite clear to me."

"The matter is very simple," explained Mr. Harmsleigh. "I speak for the company which bears my name, and I speak with full authority. We will take over your land, paying for it in five-per-cent bonds and giving you besides, as bonus, a large amount of the common stock, which will eventually be very valuable. I am talking to you straight. I wish to lay bare the entire situation. We need your land and are willing to pay for it handsomely. It is, I may say, somewhat greater in extent than the adjoining tract now under our control. You will see that the two properties can be more economically developed under a single management, and you will be getting in absolutely on the ground floor. Whether or not you choose to take up a block of the preferred stock, which is now being sold to defray the expenses of the business, I can easily have transferred to you temporarily a sufficient number of shares to insure due weight being given to your opinions by the directorate. I take it that, like many men of means, you may prefer not to undertake responsibilities as director, yourself?"

Mr. Sanders smiled deprecatingly. He had not been so much amused in a long time. "You needn't be afraid of offending me," he remarked. "I quite agree with you that it would be singularly unwise to have my

name associated with your enterprise. It wouldn't help the sale of the stock among the godly."

"Believe me, sir," protested Mr. Harmsleigh, "I was far from insinuating——"

"Not very far!" Mr. Sanders was very good-humored. "But please go on; and say anything you like. I'm very much interested."

"Quite so!" Mr. Harmsleigh continued, appearing to be reassured. "You do not care to become a director of the company, but you would have a voice in its affairs. You would get, let us say, twenty thousand dollars in five-per-cent bonds of the company."

"First-mortgage, I suppose?" Mr. Sanders spoke suavely but with a perceptible sharpness in his tone.

"Certainly—certainly. First-mortgage bonds bearing interest at five per cent," went on Mr. Harmsleigh, unperturbed, "and whatever amount of common stock the directorate might assign you. Your wishes would be met in that regard. You would have the most absolute protection, you see, even though we did not succeed in selling one single plantation."

"U-um!" said Mr. Sanders.

"As to the preferred stock," pursued Mr. Harmsleigh, "I could procure for you an almost unlimited number of shares at a very reasonable price, low enough to make them a gilt-edged investment. They are arranged for the convenience of the small investor—we are selling them at par at a dollar a share. However, I could get for you a block of almost any size at eighty cents."

"Unfortunately," replied Mr. Sanders, lighting a fresh cigar, "I don't happen to have any money on hand with which I can speculate." He eyed his visitor narrowly, wondering what would be the effect of his rather

impolite thrust. He felt that it was time to bring his man to the scratch.

Instead of showing anger or disturbance, Mr. Harmsleigh smiled appreciatively. His face was quite transformed when he showed his teeth. He revealed to Peter Sanders all that was necessary. "It is quite at your option," he said. "You put up your land. We do everything we can with it. Between ourselves, it'll be a good thing."

"I can see that it might be profitable," said Mr. Sanders. "When do you wish an answer from me?"

"I don't want to hurry your decision, of course," Mr. Harmsleigh replied, "but it would be advantageous if you could let us know within the next few days—a week at the latest. We are preparing some new literature and wish to send it to press as soon as possible. As soon as you gave your consent to the arrangement, we could go ahead with that and settle up the papers at your convenience."

"Very well," said Mr. Sanders. "I will give the matter immediate consideration." Now that he had probed Mr. Harmsleigh, he was fearful of being bored if the meeting were prolonged.

"With your permission, I might call on—this is Tuesday—Saturday afternoon or evening," suggested Mr. Harmsleigh politely, "unless I hear from you in the meantime. Of course I shall be happy to give you every opportunity of investigating the company that I can."

"Thank you," answered Mr. Sanders, in a tone that brought the visitor to his feet with a courteous word of farewell on his lips.

There followed for Peter Sanders days of some inward questioning. The opportunity to participate actively in a business enterprise, which he had been ad-

vised to seek, had come to him uninvited; but it had come in questionable shape. He had no doubt whatever that he would be happier if he embarked on the adventure, and he had likewise no doubt that he would be helping to take money from people without giving a wholly adequate return. Beneath the apostolic fervor of Harmsleigh's enthusiasm, he saw the wolfish rapacity that would stick at nothing. Peter Sanders knew the points of Harmsleigh's breed. Though he felt sure that the man had come to believe in the paradise of orange-groves, which he had so eloquently sketched, Mr. Sanders recognized in him a love for minted circles of gold that surpassed his enthusiasm for spheres of golden-coated fruit—or even for the welfare of underpaid clerks.

Temptation assailed Peter Sanders. He understood Harmsleigh's game, and he disliked again to soil his hands with the grimy touch of such market-places as he had known in the days of his own activity. But he needed work. The temptation was the more acute because, though he knew the unpleasantness of contact with slimy business, he knew that it could be endured. Between the devil of *ennui* and the deep sea of dishonesty the choice had to be made. After his solitary meditations of these latter years, he might find it harder than of old to be stonily cynical; but he knew that he could find a genuine interest in the Harmsleigh Realty Company and get along tolerably with a stifled conscience. Thus he turned the matter over in his mind, deliberated, hesitated.

It was no great help that, on Friday evening, James Garmany came in to nurse his patient. It could not have been expected of him to sympathize with his friend's difficulties, for his less subtle mind would have been incapable of suffering from them; he made his cheerful

decisions for good or for evil without premeditation and without subsequent remorse. Once seated before the fire in the library, he began his rather clumsy ministrations.

"Have you been writin' a book or two, Peter, my boy, or have you gone into business and cheered up? I think it my duty to inquire. A lot can happen to a man in a week, sometimes."

"I've been considering a business proposition, as a matter of fact," responded Mr. Sanders, shrugging his heavy shoulders. "I dare say I shall go into it. It isn't a large matter, but it would give me something to think about."

"That's right—that's right!" Mr. Garmany's tone conveyed paternal approval. "Thinkin' does the business. I suppose I could afford to buy a fancy vest once in a while even if I had nothin' in the world to do but buy it, but I shouldn't be the happy man to wear it. And vests come high when they're the real thing." With a casual thumb he indicated his own by way of illustration.

"Oddly enough," Mr. Sanders continued, "this little deal concerns the only real estate I own, barring the house here. I was telling you. I'd like to have your opinion, if you don't mind."

"Sure," said Mr. Garmany. "My opinions differ from my lawyer's in two ways only: they cost you nothin' and they're worth listenin' to. Is there money in it?"

"I don't stand to lose, anyhow." Mr. Sanders wrinkled his forehead.

"Then you should be sayin' a prayer of thanksgivin', not sittin' around askin' advice. You should know that as well as anybody, perhaps. You never did stand to lose, as far as I can remember."

"That's precisely where the shoe pinches," returned Mr. Sanders grimly. "I haven't the reputation, even with myself, of being very squeamish. The only excuse I ever made to myself in the old days was that everybody else did the same sort of thing in other ways. Not a good excuse altogether! Since I've had time to think it over, I'd not make it again. I wouldn't go back into the business—as I told you the other day. What I want to know is whether you'd consider this proposition just as bad. You've done a different kind of thing in life, anyhow."

"Order in the court!" remarked Mr. Garmany, waving his cigar with judicial dignity. "I'll referee the case, though some might say I wasn't a proper judge, only I insist that the bench be treated with the respect that is its due. What's the game?"

As briefly as possible, Peter Sanders outlined Mr. Harmsleigh's scheme for the financial betterment of the unsuccessful. He did not spare his ironies in the sketch, nor did he attempt to gloss over with casuistical argument the part he was expected to play. Quite frankly he gave his opinion of Harmsleigh as a man who would need careful watching even by an associate who had been "let in on the ground floor."

"The only part I needn't take in the business, you see," he ended, "is to put up money to bait the suckers. I'm encouraged to do that; but I don't have to, and I wouldn't. What is called the general public is going to be stung, as far as I can make out. Naturally, I don't know anything about orange-growing in lower Florida, but I can size up a man like Harmsleigh."

Mr. Garmany had listened to the recital with utter gravity of countenance, occasionally jerking his cigar sideways by a spasmodic movement of the lips. Now he removed the cigar, squinted violently, and leaned

forward. "Can you squeeze the promoter so he won't get away from you?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that," said Mr. Sanders.

"Then you'll make good money." Mr. Garmany delivered his opinion with oracular emphasis. "It'll keep your mind off the books, too, and give you a man's interest. I'd say it was a good chance, which is not meant in envy—you needin' work as you do."

"You wouldn't hesitate, even though you didn't know whether the fruit business could be made to pay—I mean by the fellows who buy ten acres apiece, or whatever it is?"

Mr. Sanders's tone was elaborately casual, but it did not conceal from his guest the real significance of the question. "Peter, my boy," said Mr. Garmany, leaning back in his chair again, "if you weren't on the edge of the same senile decay of which I was warnin' you, you wouldn't be askin'. No doubt it's lovely land down there—nice, summery weather and freedom from drought. You don't have to inquire about the reptiles, nor yet the mosquitoes, which are also found plentifully in Jersey, where many a man lives from choice. You rid yourself of the land and make it your business to watch Mr. Harmless sell it. 'Twill be a pleasant occupation, and one suited to your powers."

Mr. Sanders laughed dryly. "Thanks," he said. "You're no great help, Jim. Haven't you anything else to say?"

"Just this," responded Mr. Garmany promptly. "I'd like to ask whether I'd better be touchin' my friend Henry for another drink, or just do with what I've had."

"That's no question," Mr. Sanders replied, touching a bell.

For another half-hour they amicably discussed the

gross dishonesty of distillers and the perils of aviation, then in its infancy.

The upshot of it was that Peter Sanders remained doubtful and perplexed, irritated with himself for hesitating over a decision, and inclined to ignore his scruples about carrying the affair to its conclusion. He found it peculiarly unpleasant to have a conscience, and heartily wished that he possessed James Garmany's happy toughness of integument. He was sensitively superstitious about his future—saw no hope of escaping unhappiness, whatever course he pursued. He regarded himself as branded, not merely with public opprobrium, but equally with the private wounds of an unscrupulous career. He was Byronic in his conviction of sin, yet considerably amused at his own absurdity.

"Henry," he said, that night, while his attendant was preparing him for bed, "what should you say if a man told you that he stood between occupation and damnation, but that he was probably damned, anyhow?"

Henry paused for a moment and considered. He was accustomed to dealing with strange problems out of the blue. "I should say, sir," he replied gravely, "that the gentleman needed to exercise more and to smoke fewer cigars. That would be *my* answer, Mr. Sanders, but we never know all the difficulties other people have."

"Your answer is right, I've no doubt," said Mr. Sanders, nodding his head slowly, "but so is the latter part of your comment. I'm always giving you trouble, for example—asking questions and dirtying coats—and I seldom inquire about your state of mind. You don't look any too well to-night, as a matter of fact. You'd better drop things where they are and go to bed. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," said Henry, "and I hope you will be all the better for your sleep."

On Saturday morning Mr. Sanders walked longer than usual in the Park and tried to forget his difficulties. By vigorously concentrating his attention upon the skyline, so changed even in the two years and a half of his absence that he was not yet accustomed to its outline, he measurably succeeded in diverting his attention from the problem. He returned to it, however, when he came in. As a result of physical exercise, perhaps, he was cynically merry at his own expense. He recognized the ironical absurdity of his position more than ever. Peter Sanders, reputed to be the wickedest man in America, hesitating over a business venture for fear that somebody unknown would be cheated! Yet by afternoon, when he expected a call from Mr. Harmsleigh, he had not made up his mind to sell the land; nor by evening, though he had heard nothing from the apostle of wealth, had he come to a decision.

In the library, after dinner, he waited for Henry to bring his coffee, with a growing conviction that he would find it impossible to refuse Mr. Harmsleigh's offer, not from choice but from sheer inability to decide. He looked at Henry, wondering what the man would think if he knew his master's abject and panic-stricken state—whether any admiration could endure the exposure of it. He was aghast when Henry, after deftly setting the tray at his elbow, stood erect, folded his arms, and spoke.

"May I make bold to ask you something, sir?"

Mr. Sanders smiled despairingly. Henry must, in his uncanny fashion, have divined. "Of course," he said aloud. "I'd rather listen to you than to most men, even if what you said was unpleasant. I'll try to tell you the truth."

The servant was visibly embarrassed. "Thank you, sir," he gasped. "You know, sir, that I wouldn't trouble

you if I could avoid it. But I must, I'm afraid, this time. You see, Mr. Sanders, it's about my sister's husband."

"Oh!" exclaimed Peter Sanders, much relieved that his own affairs weren't to be discussed. "Is there anything I can do for him?"

"Why, sir!" Henry went on, looking more troubled than ever. "As to that, I can't really say till you know what has happened. I've been greatly upset, sir."

"I hope he hasn't been ill-treating your sister—" Mr. Sanders began.

"Oh, no, sir. He's as kind a soul as ever drew breath and very devoted to his family; but he has been unfortunate. We've always considered him a very superior man, but he's never got on according to his mind. Perhaps he is too ambitious. He has knocked about the world a bit, never sticking long to one place, but always supporting his family in comfort until year before last. Then he was with a family in Philadelphia, quite a swell establishment—begging your pardon for the word, sir—and he heard about the money that could be made in Texas by raising pecans—nuts, sir, as you may have heard. Fortunes could be made in a few years, so they told him."

"And so he invested, did he?" said Mr. Sanders, looking grieved.

"Worse than that, sir," continued Henry. "He bought land down there on what they called the attractive partial-payment plan, and spent the rest of his savings in going there with his family. The company promised him work, you see, until he could start his orchard. But when they got to the place, they found it little better than a desert, if you will believe me. There weren't any trees about, to speak of, and the

work was no more than digging ditches in the hot sun, which wasn't suitable, of course, for my sister's husband, who is a man of fine presence and accustomed to the best houses. He's a proud man, too, in one way, and wouldn't permit my sister to write me for a long time. They almost starved, I'm afraid, sir, if you will excuse my saying so; and the little girl was rather seriously ill, with no proper food or a doctor. They were quite done up when I got them back, and my sister's husband so knocked about that he hasn't yet been able to secure a place. The work was very rough, I take it."

"And you've been looking out for them—for how many months? Why, in the name of all that's good, haven't you told me before?" A mighty tempest of anger had been rising in Mr. Sanders during the recital of the story. He got out of his chair and stormed across the hearth-rug. "It's an outrage!" he cried. "A damned outrage! The fellows who got him into it ought to be prosecuted. Who are they?"

"It was about that, that I wished to ask your advice, Mr. Sanders," responded Henry mildly. "I thought you would know whether it would be possible to bring suit and recover any part of the money paid for the land. You will understand, of course, sir, that they have never got any dividends on the stock they purchased."

"I should think not!" fumed Mr. Sanders. "I should think not, indeed! I don't suppose there's the least chance in the world of getting back the money that your brother-in-law sank; but I'm going to see whether the rascally thieves can't be jailed for it, all the same. I'll talk with Mr. Peckham in the morning, and I'll take you with me to explain."

"I'm afraid, sir, that we couldn't afford to sue if there wasn't a good chance of recovering the money."

Mr. Sanders looked searchingly at his faithful servant. He noticed how singularly old and worn Henry appeared, as he stood fondling his shaven chin with nervous touch. The master's indignation flamed again into sudden heat.

"Henry, you infernal old idiot," he said, "you've been spending every penny you've got, I've no doubt. You've been worrying your life out about this without saying a word to me. I see now why you were so anxious to get back to New York. Of course! But I wish you to understand that this is as much my game as yours, from now on, and I'm going to see it through. It'll be good for me. What's more, you've got to let me take my turn at looking after your sister's family for a while. I've been battenning on you in one way, and they in another. It's my turn now, damn it! You've kept me going more than once, Henry, and you know it as well as I do."

"It's altogether too good of you to say so, sir, I'm sure," responded Henry, whose cadaverous face, nevertheless, turned red. "I didn't mean to upset you, this way, by telling you about my family's troubles—and just after your dinner, too, sir. But I'm greatly obliged to you, and I think we understand each other, Mr. Sanders. It is always a pleasure to do whatever I can for your health and comfort, as you know, sir."

"Henry, you're a good sort," remarked Peter Sanders more calmly, "and we'll see this thing through together as we have other things."

"Thank you," said Henry simply, and turned to go. After taking a couple of steps, however, he hesitated and swung about. "There was just this that I was going to ask you," he went on. "I thought that now we were back in town, you might possibly hear of some one who needed a competent butler, and I felt sure you

wouldn't mind speaking a good word for my sister's husband. I can recommend him heartily."

"Of course we'll get him a place somehow," answered Mr. Sanders. "Don't you worry your head about this business any more. I tell you I've got nothing better to do than to look after it."

"Thank you," said Henry again.

Once more the servant started to go, but he was called back by Mr. Sanders, who had sunk into his lounging-chair and was gazing at the fire with an odd gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"Henry," he said, "I'm expecting a visit to-night from a gentleman named Harmsleigh. Perhaps you remember him—he was here early in the week. If he comes, just tell him I'm sick abed, or dying, or anything you please. Make it clear to him, anyhow, that I can't do business with him and will kick him out if he ever shows his dirty face in my house again."

"Yes, Mr. Sanders," replied the servitor, "I will make him understand that you are not accessible to him."

When Henry was gone, Peter Sanders groaned. "I'm in for it now," he murmured to himself. "This will give me occupation for some time to come. I'm a good one to be prosecuting a gang of confidence men!" But his lips wrinkled into a smile, and he began to whistle in the most undignified manner.

CHAPTER XII

RESTITUTION

IN WHICH JUSTICE AND PHILANTHROPY ARE COMBINED

THE interview with Grantly Peckham, which took place on the following morning, did not give Mr. Sanders the satisfaction he had hoped for, though hardly expected. Mr. Peckham questioned Henry patiently as to his brother-in-law's dealings with the concern that had swallowed up his savings, then shook his head. For the moment, even though he was seated in his formidable office during business hours, he doffed his professional manner.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that we could do nothing with the case. The fellows who robbed him could crawl out of any one of a dozen holes that they've left for themselves. I'm sorry, Henry."

Peter Sanders grew red with anger. "It's an outrage, Peckham! The more I think of it, the less I'm reconciled to the thought of those harpies battenning on their victims like this. What's your law good for if it can't touch such fellows? A man leaves a good position in service to engage in the innocent production of a useful crop, is stripped of everything he has, and is thrown back on the world without a job. It's worse than anything charged against me by the lowest of the muck-rakers."

"I should hope so!" Mr. Peckham smiled. "I have always understood, Sanders, that you never victimized any one till you had looked him up in *Bradstreet's*. How-

ever, that doesn't make these sharpers any less difficult to deal with. Please have whatever papers there are sent to me. We'll look into the matter."

"I shall be very grateful, I assure you, sir, and so will my sister's husband." Henry's voice showed traces of emotion.

"Do what you can, won't you?" said Mr. Sanders. "I'll furnish supplies to any amount if we can only get at the vermin."

"We'll see," answered the lawyer shortly. "I wish to talk with you about another matter, Sanders, before you go away."

Henry, with a deferential bow, vanished from the room unnoticed by the two men.

"It's this," Mr. Peckham went on. "The young man who looks after your business for us tells me that he received a certified cheque yesterday, payable to you, the source of which is a mystery to him. It is for a considerable sum—ten thousand dollars, if I remember rightly—and was sent by some one in Chicago, I believe. Can you help him out?"

Peter Sanders frowned. "I know why it was sent," he said, "but I should prefer to have the reason remain a mystery to your young man. It does me no credit, no matter how you take it."

"Very well, then, I'll tell him to deposit the sum to your account and not inquire further. I thought it wise to make sure personally that there was no mistake."

"No, it's quite all right, I'm afraid," said Mr. Sanders. "I wish it weren't, but I needn't trouble you with the story. I do hope you may be able to find some way to punish the crooks we've been talking about. Let me know when I ought to take a hand."

Several days passed before anything further was heard of either matter. Mr. Sanders was of two minds

about writing to Gresham Clapp. He was at once pleased and annoyed that the young fellow had kept his promise to restore the money, but he was wholly mystified by the way it had come. It must have been bothersome to find out that Peckham's firm acted for him, since the connection had never been advertised by either party; and it would have been just as easy to discover that he had come back to New York to live. In any case, some word of explanation ought to have accompanied the cheque. Mr. Sanders failed to understand, and he put off from day to day his letter of acknowledgment. What, after all, could he say? He was glad to know that the young man was prospering, but he was very sorry indeed to have the money on his hands. After all that had happened, he didn't like to keep it.

Henry, meanwhile, was worried about his brother-in-law. Having once unbosomed himself, he was at less pains to conceal his trouble. He didn't like to accept money from his employer for the care of the family, yet he couldn't, out of his own resources, do much more for the unfortunates. Besides, the brother-in-law made difficulties. He had so far recovered, Mr. Sanders was assured, that his pride was hurt at having to accept support; but he had not yet got back the energy to go hard at the task of securing work.

Mr. Peckham's report, when it came, was not encouraging. "I've had one of our men go into the business pretty thoroughly," he told Mr. Sanders. "It's just as I expected. The thing was a complete swindle, but the people behind it have protected themselves. We can't touch them. A set of rich and conspicuous stockholders might be able to frighten them—possibly; but they can't be got at by process of law. They went after small fry."

"I see," said Peter Sanders gravely. "How about my buying the stock of Henry's esteemed relative?"

Grantly Peckham looked at him fixedly. An ironic smile knit together some of the wrinkles of his deeply lined face. "Are you sure," he asked, "that the scoundrels wouldn't laugh at you? They couldn't be hurt very much unless most of the stock was purchased. No one man could do it, anyhow."

A flush crept into Peter Sanders's plump cheeks and mounted to his temples. "I forgot for the moment," he said quietly, "that I'm not a decent man. All the same, I think I'll buy the fellow's stock. Fix it up for me, will you?"

"If you wish." Mr. Peckham twisted a pencil between a thumb and forefinger. "That will cost you six thousand dollars, if you pay what the miserable victim gave for it. I suppose you mean that."

"Naturally. I'm satisfied. I happen to be flush."

"We have succeeded in finding half a dozen other people," Mr. Peckham went on meditatively, "who put in something like twenty-five thousand altogether."

There was a moment's pause. "Who are they?" Peter Sanders asked.

"Oh, as I've said, small fry—I don't remember. One is a school-teacher, I think, and one seems to have some sort of position in a department store. All of them were fools, and all of them must have been hard hit."

"U-m-m!" Mr. Sanders thought. The more he reflected, the more outrageous seemed the conduct of the gang. He wondered whether he couldn't do something about it. At least he could, and would, relieve some of the misery that the poor idiots who had thrown away their money must be suffering. It wasn't as if they had gone into the business with the notion of making fortunes quickly. Like Henry's brother-in-law, they had

doubtless hoped to gain an honest competence by honest toil. It would be expensive to do them the good turn he was contemplating, but perhaps he couldn't occupy himself more profitably in any other way. He would have a gambler's chance of getting back part of the money.

"I'll do it," he said aloud. "Peckham, please gather up the lot for me. I'll take it on, myself, and see what comes of it."

A smile once more visited Mr. Peckham's craggy features. "I should not regard the investment as sound," he remarked, then cleared his throat impressively. "However, I can't let you go into the thing alone. The project commends itself to me on some grounds. In the circumstances, I think I might devote to your little charity the few thousands that I should otherwise squander on books during the next six months. I can scarcely do my full share—I have a family, Sanders."

"I'd not let you do anything," replied Mr. Sanders promptly, "except that your name and your standing may be useful. I'm trusting to the chance of frightening those fellows till they drop some of their winnings. You can have anything they give up."

"Thank you." Grantly Peckham's tone was dry. "When I dance, my friend, I pay the fiddler. As a matter of fact, I haven't had a fling in some time."

Mr. Sanders sped up town in a taxi after his interview with the lawyer, very well pleased with himself. There was a vicarious justice in using the ten thousand Gresham Clapp had sent him, and something more, to undo the worst effects of the harpies of the pecan-trees. It was a little like paying Paul in order to gain forgiveness for having robbed Peter, he grimly observed to himself; but it was a kind of restitution, after all. Besides, the off chance of getting the money back was attractive in

its way. The game would give a flavor to his days. He determined to write young Clapp about the use to which he was putting his cheque, simply because the whole thing was such a good joke. Whatever reason Gresham had for sending the money without explanation, he would appreciate the turn things had taken.

As luck would have it, James Garmany came in, that evening, to cheer his friend with good advice. He looked more prosperous than ever, and more self-satisfied. He seemed, even, a little surprised at finding Mr. Sanders in such good spirits.

"And have you taken my advice, Peter?" he asked. "You look to me like a man that's makin' money."

"Unfortunately I'm not." Peter Sanders lighted a cigar with elaborate care before he went on, while Garmany watched him through a halo of smoke. "I didn't go into the deal we were talking about, you see. There were disadvantages."

"The Harmless man wasn't all your fancy painted him, eh? That's too bad, though I thought as much. There's nothin' like real estate to give you the feelin' of content, chiefly when you can sell at a profit."

"Oh, Harmsleigh is about what I thought him from the start, as far as I know. I couldn't quite stomach his methods—or his intentions—that's all."

"Perhaps you're right about that, Peter. I don't say you ain't. He's a bad egg, 'tis true. I happened to ask a few questions after we had our talk together, and I'd not trust him too far—not till I'd punched holes in my dollars and tied strings to the same. He's a bad egg, is Harmless."

"I'm sure of it. Not that it matters very much. I'm not going into his scheme." Mr. Sanders puffed at his cigar, leaning back in his chair with great con-

tent. There was a moment's silence. "What do you know about the man?" he asked lazily.

"Know about him, is it?" Mr. Garmany displayed his elaborate waistcoat in a hearty laugh. "Know about him? I'd have told you before, save that I didn't wish to keep you from amusin' yourself to the advantage of your health, my boy. There's not much worth knowin', by the same sign. He's just one of the snakes who swallows little fellows and enjoys it. The worst I heard of him was a deal by which clerks and others went to Texas to raise nuts. 'Twas a rich haul for the promoters, I'm told, but the land wasn't otherwise useful. I'd not like that kind of scheme, myself."

Peter Sanders lifted his head from the back of the chair on which it had been pillowed, and lowered his cigar. "In Texas—nuts?" he asked sharply.

"'Twas what I said," Mr. Garmany responded. "Does the combination of 'em offend you, Pete?"

"So Harmsleigh is back of that, is he? I happen to have heard of that swindle, Jim. I'm just getting busy to see whether I can't do something about it. My Henry's family got involved in it."

"Did they now? That's a pity. And what will you be doin', may I ask?" Mr. Garmany looked sympathetic but puzzled.

In a few words Mr. Sanders outlined the story, giving his reasons for the hope that, with Grantly Peckham's help, he might compel the promoters to disgorge at least part of their dirty profits. "It will be easier to deal with them," he concluded, "now that I know Harmsleigh is mixed up in it. When it comes to a move, he'll realize that I have a pretty good line on him. I can make it interesting for the crowd, I imagine."

"No doubt you can, and you deserve some fun for

the amount of money you say you're puttin' in. Everybody to his taste, Peter. For myself, I've never had to pay much to get into any scrap I wanted, and I've seen a few fights in my time."

Mr. Sanders laughed. He was glad to have the matter taken lightly, even though he was devoting himself to it with fervor. "I'm sorry you feel that way about it," he said. "This fight is open to subscribers only. It's very exclusive. Don't you want to come in?"

Quite suddenly James Garmany sat bolt upright in his chair and brought his huge fist down on the table beside him. "Come in?" His rich Irish voice shook with anger. "Why do you make a joke of me, Sanders? Of course I'll come in! You'll need me, who knows all there is to know about land by this. I'll ante ten thousand, which I can well afford to lose. Besides, it's time some of the sharks who spoil decent business were given a lesson. I've suffered from the likes of this Harmless before now."

"Good for you, Jim!" cried Peter Sanders. "It isn't that I'm anxious to have you squander money on my private feuds; and I'd be sorry to have you put in anything like ten thousand. I'd be glad of your company, that's all. If a corporation lawyer, a retired Tammany boss, and a down-and-out gambler can't put the fear of God into a scamp like Harmsleigh, it'll be a pity."

James Garmany tugged at his moustache and scowled. "Let me be, Sanders—I'm thinkin'," he announced. "We want to do this thing right. The ticket's not what it should be as yet. I think I'll have to slate some of my land-holdin' friends from the reform element for places on it. 'Twill be more impressive to a low-lived devil like Harmless if he sees he's up against

the real thing in high-class morals. I know the men to go after, Pete—you'd not believe the men with whom I smoke cigars, these days. But 'twill do 'em no harm to drop a few thousand if we have to."

"But look here, Jim," Mr. Sanders urged. "I've taken up all the holdings that Peckham has found. There's no need of a big syndicate, you know."

"There ain't?" Mr. Garmany looked at him scornfully. "It's as I've been tellin' you, Sanders: you ruin your brain over these books of yours, and then you try to give advice to a practical man. No"—he shook his head as if in sorrow—"you need to use your mind to keep an edge on it, Peter, or you come to makin' fool remarks like the one you've just uttered. Peckham'll find more, unless his sense of smell has failed him, which I doubt. The gang we're after has cleaned up a hundred thousand on this deal of theirs, or I miss my guess. We want as many in on the game as we can get."

"All right." Peter Sanders was amused and disinclined to quarrel with his friend's diagnosis of the situation. The more victims of the pecan outrage who could be relieved, the better.

Henry, to whom Mr. Sanders confided his project at the first opportunity, was very grateful in so far as it seemed likely to relieve his brother-in-law of financial embarrassment; but he voiced a shrewd doubt concerning the recipients of the vengeful charity.

"Are you sure, sir," he asked, "that all the people who've suffered like my sister's husband will let you gentlemen take their shares? You know how it is, sir; they may think there is more to be got by holding them, since some one else seems to think them valuable."

"They'll be fools if they do." Mr. Sanders was impatient. "The chances are all against our collecting

much from the gang that robbed them in the first place."

"Oh, yes, sir, but they wouldn't have been robbed, would they, if they'd been very wise?"

Grantly Peckham, when Henry's speech was reported to him, took the same view.

"Your invaluable servant shows business sense, Sanders. I doubt whether we can collect more than three-quarters of the stock, at the outside. By the way, have you ever seen his afflicted relative?"

"No," said Mr. Sanders. "Why?"

"I'm in need of a butler, or shall be shortly, and I wondered whether the man was a paragon of the virtues like your factotum."

"Henry vouches for him," Mr. Sanders answered. "That is, I believe he told me that his brother-in-law was a very superior person, but too ambitious. Perhaps his misfortunes will steady him. I'd be willing to accept Henry's guarantee."

"Yes—decidedly." Mr. Peckham smiled in the stony way characteristic of him. "My house will be benefited, I feel sure, by the ministrations of a member of Henry's family. Have him send the fellow round, will you? Meanwhile, I wish to tell you what we've been doing in our little campaign against the robbers of the poor."

During the next fortnight, the philanthropic enterprise upon which Peter Sanders had so lightly embarked became for him an absorbing interest. For the moment he was almost a busy man. Peckham consulted him on the one hand, while Garmany, who was recruiting what he called the army of plutocratic justice, reported almost daily. I need not record the stages by which the plot—it was little else—was shaped to perfection. The men in Grantly Peckham's office uncovered the wicked-

ness of Harmsleigh's company and rescued as many victims as were willing to be helped; James Garmany found men to take over stock as it was secured, though Mr. Sanders remained the largest subscriber. At last everything was made ready for the effective stroke.

In this Peter Sanders was the chief figure. It was arranged that he should invite Harmsleigh and his nefarious associates to a conference at his house, ostensibly to discuss their projected development of the Florida Everglades. Henry, it appeared, had been firm but not discourteous in turning Mr. Harmsleigh away, so there seemed to be every chance of his accepting overtures for a renewal of relations. Thus entrapped, the promoters were to be met by a committee of their self-appointed judges, who would show them the mercy that they deserved.

"Your drawing-rooms will be a very proper meeting-place," remarked Grantly Peckham to Mr. Sanders. "Our friends will probably be so astounded to find it a sink of righteousness that they will throw up their hands at once."

Peter Sanders, though he winced inwardly, could not deny the justice of this, and laid his plans with full recognition that his evil repute might serve as a useful decoy. He had no clearly formulated notion of penance in his mind, but he was not at all sorry to be put to inconvenience for the sake of the good cause, and even to have his pride a little hurt by the thought that he could do his part the more easily because of his unenviable record. If it took a rogue to catch a rogue, the hotter the hue and cry—that was all.

On the afternoon designated, Mr. Harmsleigh and two companions were shown into Mr. Sanders's library—he had drawn the line at the rooms down-stairs because of their unfortunate associations—where they

were met by the self-appointed committee. James Garmany was there, looking foolish; Grantly Peckham, who seemed bored; Mr. Walter Suydam, a figure of starched and opulent righteousness; and Mr. Henry T. Cleves, the head of the great realty company that bears his name. Mr. Cleves was clearly afraid lest some of the vileness of the Sanders house rub off on his good repute. Looking up at the moment when the Harmsleigh party entered the room, Peter Sanders twinkled. It was an unexpected and ill-assorted company!

The effect of the four waiting gentlemen upon the representatives of the Harmsleigh Realty Company was instantaneous. Mr. Harmsleigh's voracious grin froze on his ugly face, while his two associates looked less smooth than an instant before. They were overwhelmed, it appeared to Peter Sanders, by the honor of meeting such a powerful group of financiers. Mr. Harmsleigh, however, quickly recovered from his surprise. He advanced, grinning fixedly, towards Peter Sanders, and shook his hand.

"So glad you have decided to come in on our proposition," he said. "The two friends I have brought with me know the Everglades as well as I do, and will set your mind at rest about the wonderful bounty that heaven has provided for settlers in that—eh—region."

"I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Harmsleigh," Mr. Sanders replied. Blinking solemnly, he greeted the friends, who were introduced as Mr. Grafton and Mr. Blackstone, though one of them looked Hebraic. "Allow me to introduce all of you to these friends of mine, who have happened to drop in, this afternoon." He looked severely at the agitated Mr. Cleves while he went through the form of presentation. The truth was that he was afraid of what Cleves might do, and silently cursed

Garmany for bringing so stiff-necked an individual into their council.

"It pleases me very much," he went on after the introductions had been acknowledged, "that my friends happen to be here. I shouldn't wonder if they would be interested in your plan, Mr. Harmsleigh. I've been asking their advice about it, anyhow, so our talk needn't be hindered in any way."

Mr. Harmsleigh smoothed the back of his permanently arranged hair with a quick and nervous movement that indicated embarrassment. "I don't know," he said, "whether we could divide our interests advantageously beyond a certain point. Your friends, Mr. Sanders——"

"Yes, there are several of them, to be sure; but I'm willing to let them in on my own holdings, you know. No one else need make any sacrifice."

"I see—I see." A great light seemed to burst on Richard Harmsleigh. Mr. Sanders, he must have thought, was preparing to fleece a group of his own acquaintances, in addition to taking part in the main *coup*. He smiled, intolerably, at the notion.

"In that case," put in Mr. Grafton, who looked like a rat that had suddenly grown to be a man, "we shall have to arrange matters very carefully. We must safeguard the interests of our stockholders, mustn't we?"

"Please don't misunderstand me," Peter Sanders said earnestly, narrowing his eyes. "I'm very far from suggesting that you do anything to hurt the investors whom you represent. But my friends here happen to control a considerable amount of ready capital. It has occurred to me that possibly your company might have some other enterprise in view where you could use their money."

Mr. Harmsleigh tapped his wolfish teeth with a heavy

ring, and looked at Mr. Blackstone. "I think we could find the proper outlet for their money," he remarked. "Don't you think so?"

"That's right. There's chances enough." Mr. Blackstone, a ponderous man with eyes almost buried in the flesh that surrounded them, approved the suggestion firmly.

"Along the lines you sketched for me in connection with the business in Florida?" asked Mr. Sanders. "You ought to make it worth our while, you know."

"Just about like that," Mr. Harmsleigh replied, between his teeth, which he was still tapping unpleasantly. "I'm thinking."

"May I say a word?" inquired Grantly Peckham innocently, in response to a covert signal from Mr. Sanders. "As a group, we have a considerable interest in a block of land in Texas that is still unimproved. Do you suppose, with your experience in real estate, you could use it? I've been wondering whether we couldn't get people to raise pecan nuts there. I understand that there is a market for them."

Mr. Blackstone shook his head. "I don't know; I don't know. I should be afraid of that. We've done well on that scheme already, and it ain't good policy to work a good thing too hard."

Mr. Harmsleigh, who had at first seemed distrustful of Peter Sanders's associates, now gained confidence. "We might make it go," he said. "We made a pot of money out of the deal, and we could pool the new one with our scheme of development in the Everglades. It would be inspiring, would it not, to be opening up two tracts in two great States at one and the same time?"

"The more I think of it," remarked Mr. Sanders, "the more I am impressed by the beauty of the scheme."

I think I can answer for the interest of my friends here." With one accord they nodded assent. "The details don't matter for the present. The question is, Mr. Harmsleigh, whether you and your friends will go into it."

"That's right. It looks good to me," said Mr. Blackstone.

"I'm perfectly satisfied if a proper division is made," agreed Mr. Grafton cautiously. "The principle is all right."

"You see," Mr. Harmsleigh concluded, "we are at one in our willingness to embark on the undertaking with the support of your capital. An extra fifty thousand will put us where we can handle things easily. I, for one, believe in co-operation."

"Then perhaps I had better explain," said Peter Sanders quietly, "that the land we own in Texas, Mr. Harmsleigh, has been bought by us from the victims of your miserable swindle down there. Mr. Peckham, whose legal reputation you know, can explain the details of the operation better than I—and your responsibility, no doubt."

They had all been comfortably seated till now about a large library-table, making a fair show of mild financial deliberation. Mr. Sanders sprang his mine with sensational effect. Of the allies, Mr. Peckham watched Harmsleigh like a cat about to spring; Mr. Cleves looked more agitated than ever, and Mr. Suydam more starched; while James Garmany developed a calm intensity of expression that showed his experience with emotional crises in the past. As for the hapless band of real-estate operators, they were moved also in different ways. Mr. Blackstone seemed annoyed and inclined to truculence, but sat still and said nothing; and his companion, the ratlike Grafton, wriggled vio-

lently, opening and shutting his mouth as if to utter protests that could not be expressed. Mr. Harmsleigh showed less self-control, or fewer inhibitions. He pushed back his chair and bounced up, waving a hand in the air.

"You'll pay for this!" he shouted.

"We have paid already," returned Peter Sanders coolly. "We own the land, I tell you."

"The bigger fools, you! You can't develop it, even if you *are* the cleverest jail-bird that ever beat the law. I'll have you in Sing Sing yet, if you try to bamboozle me."

"You mistake our intent." Grantly Peckham's clear, cold voice cut in on the man's wild raving. "I think that your wisest course will be to take over from us the land we have acquired. We represent other things than this property in Texas."

"I won't be blackmailed," said Harmsleigh sullenly, subsiding into his chair. "I don't care what you represent. You're a nice lot to get together, pretending you're honest men! I know things about all of you."

"Then you must be aware that we shall do precisely what we intend—get back the money you induced certain very silly people to put into your little scheme." Mr. Peckham spoke in a tone of sweet reasonableness.

"You haven't got any legal hold on us. Don't you know that?" Mr. Blackstone asked the question with an air of angry defiance.

"Fortunately," Peter Sanders remarked, "this isn't a court of law."

"Here! All of you attend to me." Mr. Garmany's great fist hit the table, and his voice thundered. "The question ain't what one and another of us knows, and it ain't what could be done by the courts, as my friend Sanders here has said. Few of us could have our pic-

tures taken as painted angels, no doubt, but—by all the saints in heaven!—’tis ourselves who will see the right thing done this time.”

“I don’t see how you expect to make us pay over to you the profits of a perfectly legitimate deal that you seem to have butted in on to your disadvantage.” Mr. Harmsleigh had regained his insolent composure, and showed fight.

“Ye don’t!” James Garmany dropped his voice to a mocking growl. “Then, by all the powers, though I hate to call to man’s notice his God-given infirmities, you’re too slow on the uptake for the line of business you’re in. One day you’d be makin’ a blunder, anyhow, so it don’t matter that this is the time.”

“Perhaps Mr. Peckham, who has won a great reputation for getting rich corporations out of small holes, will be kind enough to explain what you intend to do.” Harmsleigh was still defiant.

Grantly Peckham looked at him as if he were some new and interesting kind of worm. “I think Mr. Garmany means to convey,” he said, “that you will find it very difficult to continue in business at all unless you disgorge.”

“You have explained your methods pretty fully to us, you see,” added Peter Sanders.

“What about *your* methods?” sneered Harmsleigh, turning on him.

Mr. Sanders shrugged his heavy shoulders. “Oh, the very worst! As far as I know, however, I have never robbed the defenceless poor, and I have for some time ceased to tempt the rich to throw their money away. If you run across a case where I’ve done such harm as you’ve been doing, I should be grateful to have you bring it to my attention. I would make restitution at once.”

"That's cheap talk," said Mr. Grafton, whose pointed face had grown very red indeed. "If we did what you want, it would wipe out more than half our capital." He ended weakly on the tone of complaint.

"They've got us, Harmsleigh—squeezed." Mr. Blackstone made the admission ponderously. "That's it. What's the use of squealing?"

Harmsleigh threw himself into an awkward attitude and bit his lips nervously. "I guess they have," he said after a moment.

Simultaneously the three men rose and turned towards the door.

"One moment." Grantly Peckham arrested them. "I have one or two papers here that we shall have to sign before we break up. It will avoid the necessity of a later conference, if we attend to these matters now." One might have supposed that he was addressing some board of philanthropists.

After the others had gone—victimized scoundrels, and triumphant conspirators of justice—James Garmany and Mr. Sanders sat for a little before the fire.

"Caved in rather quickly at the last, didn't they?" remarked Peter Sanders.

"As a man will when a ton of rock hits him," Mr. Garmany answered, tilting his cigar thoughtfully. "'Twas well for them they did so. When I get into fightin' trim, Pete, I'm still game, and I took a dislike to this Harmless man as soon as I set eyes on him."

"It's a funny thing—" Mr. Sanders paused and tapped the arm of his chair impatiently. "I half hoped that I'd lose at least ten thousand on the deal. I'd like to get rid of that much on my own account; and I thought I might do it by helping out the poor suckers who swallowed Harmsleigh's bait. Never mind how the money came to me—I don't want it."

"Who's askin' how it came to your hands?" Mr. Garmany smiled. "I see you have a troubled conscience, which is enough. But I'll tell you what could be done with a sum like that."

"What's that?"

"Down in my ward—though it's little enough I have to say about doin's there now—there's a sort of club for the young ones and the sick that some women have set up. They've done me dirt, them women, in large measure by their innocence, no doubt; but they've perhaps found a better way to care for the people than the old one. Anyhow, there they are, and they could use your money fine. I'll slip it to 'em on the quiet if you wish."

"Good. I'll take your word for it and make out a cheque to you. I can't have the money bothering me any longer."

"I'll be proud to do it, for indeed 'twill be a help. I bear no malice to the women and to the other reformers, now that I know what it is to deal in lots on Fifth Avenue. The game's excitin', and it pays as well as politics, or better, if you do it right."

So Peter Sanders expended in wise philanthropy the sum that he had won and lost, received again to salve a young man's conscience, and risked in a deed of retributive charity. He still had heard nothing more from Gresham Clapp or about him, and he often wondered why. He wished to find out why the young man had chosen to send ten thousand dollars into space without an explanatory word, and he wished also to learn whether Paula Smith had anything to do with the matter. He suspected her, but he must wait. Some day, unless he had misread the situation, he would find his suspicions justified in the full publicity of the press. Lest any news escape him, he became a sedulous reader

of the columns in which are recorded the engagements and the marriages of people of importance. These studies fed his mordant humor, but they prolonged themselves wearisomely: there is an appalling sameness about such announcements. These alliances were uniformly represented as brilliant. Apparently only the fortunate ever married, and they always married well. "What a stale, flat, and rose-colored world!" sighed Mr. Sanders, one day.

CHAPTER XIII

INTERVENTION

IN WHICH MR. SANDERS PLAYS THE PART OF ONE OF THE
HIGH GODS

WEEKS passed without a word from Gresham Clapp. Mr. Sanders walked in the Park for the good of his health, and idled in his library with the vain hope of accomplishing something with his mind. It was useless, he discovered after a time, to form projects of doing more with books than enjoy them. He was incapable of using them to any specific end, and his vague dreams of becoming an amateur of scholarship faded into nothingness. He must henceforth regard his books as the delight of odd hours: not as a serious occupation. The pity was that his lack of other mental resources threw him back upon them more continuously than was desirable. "Reading maketh a full man," he quoted to himself, one day, and added the commentary that satiety was excessively unpleasant.

What he lacked, of course, was some steady business that would keep him in harness, day by day. Jim Garmany had been right about that from the first. If he had work to do, reading would take its natural place in his life and regain all its old ascendancy over him. But even Garmany, resourceful as he was, could suggest nothing as an occupation that wasn't fantastically out of the question.

"You seem to think, Jim," he said, one evening, "that I'm a boy of twenty, asking advice about a lifetime's vocation. I'm not. I'm an old fellow of sixty ill-spent years, looking for some game to occupy his mind."

"There's golf." Mr. Garmany thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his magnificent waistcoat, and cocked his head judicially. "I'm told by my rich friends that it takes the mind like nothin' else. To watch it, I'd think 'twould take the mind entirely, and for good. But I'm not yet so far gone, myself, as to dope myself with chasin' a little ball about an open field of grass."

"You flatter me," said Mr. Sanders good-humoredly. "I'm afraid that I couldn't do with golf, either. It would have all the demerits of books as an object in life, and none of their advantages. I want real work, I tell you."

"And be damned to you!" remarked Mr. Garmany, smiling. "I'm no intelligence office, though you take me as such. I'm goin' home."

The one mitigation of Mr. Sanders's lot at this time was the growing inclination of quite respectable people to cultivate rather than to avoid his acquaintance. Grantly Peckham apparently took a humorous satisfaction in introducing him as an old and valued friend, stressing his activities as a book-collector and reader in a way that sometimes brought an embarrassed flush to his cheeks. Still, it was agreeable to have these respectable citizens recognize him, and it was surprisingly easy to get on with them. They didn't go the length of introducing him to their clubs, but some of them formed the habit of dropping in for a talk in the modestly celebrated library. Mr. Sanders's house came to be, to the little circle thus constituted, a sort of club, superior to other clubs in privacy and much better managed as to cigars and possible drinks. There were, of course, no vouchers to sign, and the quality of the service was unexcelled.

Henry saw to all that: Henry, who beamed with

gratification every time a gentleman of solid respectability entered the house. As in the old days he had oiled the domestic machinery until the loss of a moderate sum at play was almost worth while, in view of the comfort with which it was accomplished, so now he made it his business to see that any group of three or four men who happened to come in for a chat should be induced to come again by the unobtrusive perfection of his arrangements. He had his share in the gradual triumph of Peter Sanders over prejudice.

One of the gentlemen who were attracted to the Sanders house—by no means wholly through the creature comfort there provided, it must in justice be said—was the stiff-necked Walter Suydam, who had taken part in the campaign against Harmsleigh. Mr. Sanders could never understand why Suydam liked him, but he knew quite well why he liked Suydam. The man was no fool—he had an abundant store of kindly wit and shrewd common sense underneath his pompous surface—and he was a thoroughbred. One couldn't ask more of a man than that, even though he was redolent of his wealth and social position. For the reason, whatever it was, that Peter Sanders could not fathom, Mr. Suydam came frequently to the library after his first introduction on the day of Harmsleigh's discomfiture; and he seemed happiest when no one else was about. At such times he talked most freely and appeared least impressed by a sense of his own importance.

"It is curious," he observed, one afternoon, when he and Peter Sanders had been talking in a desultory fashion for half an hour, "how an idea will sometimes take possession of a man. There's no accounting for it." He spoke as if ideas were extremely dangerous.

"Ideas?" Mr. Sanders crossed his plump legs and

looked at the well-shod foot thus suspended before him. "Men have died for them before this, I'm told. I sometimes wish one would get hold of me with a grip like that."

"They make a man a nuisance. That's the worst of it. People get them most unaccountably, too. There's the whole business of inventing, for example: it seems to be done purely by chance. A person with no previous experience in manufacturing hits on a notion that may be very good in its way, but he's likely to be helpless when it comes to putting his idea on the market. And one can never be quite sure that an invention will succeed, though the inventor always thinks it's sure to."

"So I've heard," said Mr. Sanders. "If so many foolish things weren't patented, it might be worth while to form a society to protect inventors from their own weaknesses. You could perhaps keep a few men from selling a million-dollar idea for a song, but you could never be quite certain that a song wasn't its proper price."

"That's precisely what is troubling me now." Mr. Suydam tweaked his white moustache viciously. "A man has come to me with a little scheme of his, in which he's sure there's a fortune. There may be, or there may not. I don't know. What I'm sure of is that he'll not manage the business end of it decently. Now I haven't time to run his little business for him, and I don't like to give him money to throw away. At the same time, I'd like him to have a chance. He's queer, but he has served me very well."

"You say he hasn't any experience in business? The usual type of mechanical genius, I suppose."

"No, not that kind at all," replied Mr. Suydam slowly. "That's why I said it was a queer case. He's a shrewd fellow from the country who doesn't know

any more about mechanics than about business. He has simply hit on something that may be marketable, and he doesn't know what to do with it. He came to me, I suppose, because I'm the only man he knows who could back him. I don't see how I can do it, as the thing stands, but I hate to block any one's legitimate ambition."

"You say he has been in your employ?" Mr. Sanders was not greatly interested, but sympathized with his companion in his difficulty.

"Yes. That's the way he happens to know me. He has been, for some years, the superintendent of one of the apartment-houses in which I'm interested. I make a point of visiting my properties personally, you see—it's a hobby of mine. I like to know what sort of thing I own. So I've seen the man occasionally."

"What sort of thing has he invented, may I ask? Something to do with the apartment-house?"

"No. I suppose I've been taken by the oddity of it, really." Mr. Suydam laughed. "The man's a bachelor, and he has made a new kind of folding perambulator—baby-carriage, you know. Apparently he got the idea through watching mothers with infants on surface-cars, and now he wishes to give up his position and make the things. It does seem to me that he has a useful notion. There will always have to be perambulators, I take it."

"But the poor fellow has neither capital nor business training, you say?"

The mad suggestion came to Mr. Sanders that this might be the opportunity for which he had been looking. Why, forsooth, shouldn't one manufacture baby-carriages if one chose? As Mr. Suydam said, they were a necessity of civilization.

"He hasn't anything," Mr. Suydam answered, "ex-

cept two or three thousand in savings. And he pesters me with applications for aid. If forwardness would bring him success, he couldn't fail. He's obstinate in his determination to put the thing through; but I can't do much for him, I'm afraid."

"Why don't you turn him over to me?" Mr. Sanders uncrossed his legs and turned a little sideways to look directly at his visitor. "I've more money than I really want, and I'm badly in need of something to do. I have business experience, too—of a sort. Perhaps I could be useful to the fellow, but in any case I ought to be able to pass the time in developing his idea. If I lost what I put in, it wouldn't greatly matter. I'm alone in the world."

"Do you really mean it?" Walter Suydam looked round the lofty room and back at his host. "Could you bear to exchange your scholarly seclusion for days in, perhaps, one of the less agreeable parts of Hoboken? Lamberton would have to be watched for fear of his doing something quite absurd."

"Lamberton?" Peter Sanders was puzzled. The name seemed familiar to him, yet at the moment he could not tell how.

"Yes. That's the man's name. Didn't I tell you? He's perfectly honest, but he hasn't business sense, I fear. That is why I have hesitated about helping him."

"But may I?" Mr. Sanders asked the question more insistently. He had it now. Of course. This inventor must be the very same Lamberton who had charge of the apartment-house where he had lived last winter. It would be imprudent, however, to tell Suydam that a fugitive from justice had hidden in one of his properties for an entire winter with the connivance of the agent.

"Take him over, by all means," said Mr. Suydam, smiling. "If you have the time and patience to look after him, you will be doing a very kind act. I didn't suppose it would be in your line, that's all. I'm not sure," he added reflectively, "that you may not make some money out of it. If the scheme calls for more money than you care to risk, just let me know. I'd trust your judgment. I'll send word to Lamberton, by the way, that he is to communicate with you."

"Thank you. I should at least like to look into the matter."

"To change the subject," remarked Mr. Suydam, "there's something I wished to ask you. Can you tell me where I can find anything about the tenure of land under the Roman Empire? I've been meaning to look into the question."

Whereupon Peter Sanders became of real use to his guest, and awakened admiration as a man of sound learning. The subject had happened to excite his interest, some years before, and had been pursued until he had the main outlines of it well in mind.

When Henry came in, that evening, to advise about some matter of household economy, Mr. Sanders told him of the new project. Tentatively he suggested that he might find an outlet for his energies by backing Lamberton in the manufacture of his folding baby-carriage.

"Is it quite the thing, sir?" asked Henry dubiously. "Is it quite—quite dignified?"

"Of better repute than running a gambling-house, I should say," answered his employer, smiling. "Besides, I always found Lamberton amusing, I remember. It would be rather good fun to hear his comments on the affair."

"But—but to be associated with him in business, Mr. Sanders?"

"I've been associated with stranger specimens." Mr. Sanders shrugged his shoulders. "It's all very well for you to be snobbish, Henry. You have an unblemished reputation, and can afford to be. I haven't the right. Of course I don't know whether I shall go in with Lamberton—perhaps he will have nothing to do with me—but I'm going to see him."

As a matter of fact, he was taken with the idea from the first and fully determined to put it through, provided, that is, Lamberton's invention had any practical value. The whimsicality of the scheme appealed to him. For Peter Sanders to engage in the manufacture of vehicles for innocent babes seemed to him eminently fitting in a topsyturvy world. He had little doubt that Lamberton would welcome his co-operation, for he remembered the man's unaffected admiration of himself as a person who had achieved a bad eminence. It would matter little to Lamberton, whose sense of values was rudimentary, that the eminence was not only bad but actually rotten. The clamor of the great world was enough, whether in applause or in condemnation. Decidedly, he would go in with Lamberton.

Before any move was made in the business enterprise, however—before, indeed, the inventor had come for the promised interview—Mr. Sanders's attention was distracted by another matter. At length he heard from Gresham Clapp, and found himself involved by a human situation quite unlike anything he had ever experienced before.

In the first place he received a note from Mr. Clapp, announcing his presence in New York and wishing to know whether Mr. Sanders was in town. This came through Grantly Peckham's office, which implied that the young man had not kept track of his friend's affairs. It would have been easy to discover that Mr. Sanders

had resumed his residence in his own scandal-ridden house: the newspapers of the continent had been announcing it for some weeks, though in modest paragraphs. Mr. Sanders, who was inclined to resent the casual way in which his ten thousand dollars had been returned to him, without a word of explanation, was at first minded to pay no attention to the note. Affection conquered pride, however. He was fond of the young fellow, and very much desired news of him. Besides, there was always the lurking suspicion that Clapp might be the young man who was causing Miss Paula and her aunt so much trouble. If there was anything in it, the two young people ought to be married by this time. Still, Miss Smith had never written, as she had promised. The thing would bear investigating. So Mr. Sanders had Henry telephone that he was at home and would be glad if Mr. Clapp could dine with him on the following evening.

He came, looking perceptibly older and less boyish than a year before: almost too highly strung, indeed, though professing perfect health.

"You see that I have come back to my own," said Mr. Sanders, after they had shaken hands.

"Yes, I hadn't known till your man telephoned to me," Mr. Clapp replied, standing alert and erect just inside the doorway of the library. "I'm awfully glad of it, for you must be much happier here among your own things. Excuse my mentioning it, but this is a wonderful room."

"It is where I live—too much of the time." Mr. Sanders pulled a long face. "Still, it's much better to be idle and bored here than to be chased about the earth under the ban of the law. I've no right to complain. Presently I shall get settled into new ways, no doubt."

At this moment Henry announced dinner, and they went down together to the stately and solemn dining-room, which, like all the lower parts of the house, was more than adequate, but rather melancholy, in these later days. There they talked chiefly of Mr. Clapp's experiences in the world of business, about which he discoursed readily though with somewhat less enthusiasm than he had shown at Doctor Henderson's, fourteen months before. It was evident that he was now well settled into harness, doing his proper work as the heir of the family fortune and doing it to the satisfaction of his father as well as of himself. That he found the responsibilities he had undertaken less exciting than at first, could not be wondered at. Besides, before they had been talking very long, Peter Sanders's keen eye had detected a shadow resting on the young man. Something was troubling him.

In the library, after dinner, he set himself to find out the cause. "By the way," he remarked casually, "you're not married yet, I suppose? You said something about a girl, last year, I remember."

Gresham Clapp's still mobile face clouded. "Married!" he answered shortly. "I should say not. I'm not even engaged. I wish to the deuce I were."

"Gone back on you?"

The young man threw himself into a big chair and gazed at the fire for a few seconds before he answered.

"I don't know that I can say that. But it's off."

"I see. Perhaps you'd rather not talk about it."

"No. On the contrary, I'd rather talk. You see, you come into it in a way."

"I?"

"In a way, you do." Mr. Clapp's tone was gloomy. "I made the mistake of telling my *fiancée* about our

relations to each other—yours and mine—and we quarrelled. That's about all there is to it."

Peter Sanders frowned. "That was a mistake, I'm afraid. Anybody who knows me had better keep it dark. The rule is to curse the gambler, no matter how ready you are to take a chance, yourself."

"Oh, I didn't bring you into it like that, Mr. Sanders," said Gresham Clapp earnestly. "How can you think so? I'm not an absolute 'it.' I merely put it that I had been done out of ten thousand dollars, and had played a dirty game on the man afterwards in order to get the money back. I shouldn't have been fool enough to say anything about it, except that I was on the point of paying up to you. I was a little drunk with the idea of being a free man again, I suppose, and I told Paula."

Mr. Sanders let the name pass without comment. There might be a hundred Paulas in Chicago, of course, and this one might be any one of the ninety-nine rather than his friend Miss Smith. Yet he hadn't a doubt any longer that she *was* Miss Smith. He said nothing at the moment because he wished to fathom her foolish excuse for quarrelling with her lover. Why should any girl turn a man away because he had proved himself almost quixotically honest? Women must be as strange as report said. Could Miss Paula have divined, after all, that Peter Sanders came into it? She was clever, and she wasn't a bad actress, as he knew from experience. But why, if she had made out the connection, should she mind? Surely it would be unreasonable to object to her lover's association with a man whom she herself accepted as a friend. He couldn't understand.

"I don't quite see," he said.

"See?" The young man cupped his chin with his hands and addressed the fire thoughtfully. "I get her

idea, though I quarrelled with her in trying to drive it out of her head. She thinks she can't trust me because I did a mean trick that she knew nothing about at the time. As if I could possibly have written to explain that I was about to pull off a dirty game that I thought of only on the spur of the moment! It's *ex post facto* if anything ever was; it's damned foolishness; but it's what's the matter between us. Let's talk about something else."

"You haven't seen her for some time, I take it," Mr. Sanders persisted.

"Oh, yes, I see her—sometimes. I'm going to quit, though, if she won't listen to reason. I can't stand it. She's here in New York now, as a matter of fact, with her aunt, and she seems to think we ought to be perfectly good friends."

Mr. Sanders looked hard at the miserable youth. In spite of his sympathy, his eyes twinkled. "Would it surprise you very much," he asked, "if I told you that I feel sure I have the honor of knowing the young lady?"

Gresham Clapp dropped his hands and sat bolt upright. "Know her!" he exclaimed.

"Don't be too much shocked. Isn't she Paula Smith?"

"Yes, but——"

"But I'm not a proper acquaintance for a young girl, no matter how learned and emancipated she may be. I quite agree with you. I am not, however, wholly to blame for the impropriety, and it has even been winked at by the elder Miss Paula."

"You know them? Where? Sacred snakes!" In his excitement, Gresham was oblivious to his friend's irony as well as to his own imperfections of style.

Briefly and good-humoredly Mr. Sanders told his

story. "You see that Miss Paula doesn't tell everything she knows," he concluded.

"I should say not! The little devil! But isn't she a good one?" For some reason the young man seemed more cheerful than he had been all the evening.

"I can't understand," Mr. Sanders went on, "why she is displeased with you for doing no more than she has done—except for our financial adventures, of course. By the way, why didn't you take the trouble to write me when you sent me that cheque of yours? I should have appreciated the attention."

"Oh—that! I was down and out at the time, and I didn't even know whether you were in this country. I'm awfully sorry. I didn't feel like writing to anybody. You see, it was just after——"

"I understand. Excuse me for interrupting, but I wish to tell you that I've invested the money for you in a very worthy charity down-town. But, tell me, why does Miss Paula make such a point of your acquaintance with me?"

"Why, she doesn't know anything about it!" Gresham Clapp dropped his head into his hands again. "I wouldn't tell her who the man was whom I had my dealings with, though she wanted to know. That was one thing we had the row about."

Peter Sanders shook his head. "I'm anything but an expert," he said, "but I should think your course not wholly wise. Perhaps she wished to have you make a clean breast of it."

"Oh, I don't pretend to have been wise; only the more I told her, the wilder she got. It wouldn't have done any good to bring you in by name, though I would have if I'd known what she'd been up to. She was finding fault with me, not with anybody else, known or unknown. It's all off, I guess, and I've got to take it. It's

good of you to let me talk, Mr. Sanders. I haven't said a word to any one before, and I expect it won't do me any harm to have it out, once in a way. I don't know why I can blubber so to you."

"Don't let that trouble you," said Mr. Sanders. "I'm out of it all, you know—out of the world. I'm very safe." As a matter of fact, he was so moved by the confidence that had been given him that he found it hard to make his voice quite even as he went on. "You say that the Misses Smith are in town now?"

"Yes, at the Palace. I'm going to tell Paula to-morrow what I think of her."

"If you will permit me"—Peter Sanders hesitated, for he was in great terror lest he make a false move—"I'd like to suggest that you delay your—your avowals for a little. The ladies promised me last summer that they would sometime come to see my library. Possibly I could arrange it for to-morrow, or perhaps the day after. If you can restrain your natural impatience for so long, I have the notion that it might be a good plan for you to meet Miss Paula here. I am ready to make a full and frank confession before you both, and to plead with her as well as I know how. I don't see how she could have the cheek not to forgive you, if it isn't profanity to put it that way."

Gresham Clapp started to his feet with sparkling eyes. "By Jove!" he cried. "You're a corker, Mr. Sanders. If anything could bring Paula to time, a jolt like that would. That is," he corrected himself, "if she cares anything about me at all, which I sometimes doubt."

"I am inexperienced," said Mr. Sanders, "but I suspect that Miss Smith has occasionally thought about you pretty hard. In any event, I should like to entertain all of you here."

It was luck, of course, that he found the ladies in when he telephoned, the following morning; and it was luck that they had no engagements for the afternoon. He was unaffectedly delighted when they accepted at once his invitation to have tea with him in his library. (The suggestion of tea was Henry's, not his own.) They would come, certainly, for it would be a pleasure to see both his treasures and himself. They would come—yes—that afternoon. Mr. Sanders was relieved by their prompt acceptance. He was unwilling to make them conspicuous by calling on them at their hotel, or by being recognized in their company in any public place; yet he wished very much to see them. The unsmirched reputation of his books might possibly excuse their visiting his house, and in any case they wouldn't be observed. In the gathering dusk of a murky day they would be quite safe.

Relieved of any misgivings on their behalf, he set about making preparations to receive them fittingly. It was a great occasion both for him and for the house, which in all its gay history had never yet had a woman under its roof, except in the nether regions that Henry commanded. Realizing this, Mr. Sanders was more nervous than he had been before many a bout when fortunes were to be staked. He bothered Henry about the disposition of furniture, and was foolishly anxious lest the apparatus for serving tea should prove inadequate. Henry was so close to losing his temper with the interference that he was driven to saying icily: "I make bold to say, sir, that I have arranged for tea every day, sir, to the satisfaction of ladies in more than one household."

In the midst of his domestic anxieties, Mr. Sanders fortunately remembered that he had not yet informed Gresham Clapp that the meeting was actually ar-

ranged, and he had some difficulty in getting word to the young man. This engaged him until Henry had had time to perfect his adjustments of the household to the unwonted occasion. Then there was nothing to do but wait the event.

The disappointed lover was the first of the guests to arrive. He came in, fresh and smiling—not quite decently dejected, Peter Sanders thought. Still, the young fellow was better company when not cast down, so he might be granted the privilege of gayety. For his own part, Mr. Sanders was sure that he had never possessed the mental resiliency that would have brought him, in such good spirits, to meet a lady who had definitely sent him about his business.

When, a few minutes later, the coming of the other visitors was heralded by a faint rustle in the hall outside, Mr. Sanders felt himself much more nervous than the young man. He rushed forward to the doorway to encounter the Misses Smith on the threshold and to break, if possible, the shock of their meeting with Mr. Clapp. This was all very well for the moment. They paused to shake hands, and to express their pleasure at being asked to see his marvellous books—as they were kind enough to call them on faith.

“What a beautiful house you have, Mr. Sanders!” exclaimed Miss Paula, gazing about her with frank interest. “How on earth did you find out that we were in town?”

“Why, I told him, of course,” said Gresham Clapp, moving briskly out of the background. “Aren’t you glad to see me, Paula? How do you do, Miss Smith?”

“How nice to see you, Gresham!” Miss Smith’s greeting was cordial.

Her niece’s was less enthusiastic. She took his outstretched hand, however, and even permitted him to

hold it for a moment. A perplexed frown settled on her forehead while she looked from her lover to Mr. Sanders. "You never told me you knew Mr. Sanders," she said reproachfully.

"You never told me you knew him, for that matter. Did you, now? I didn't find it out till yesterday." The young man's tone implied that he also had been grossly deceived.

"Please don't quarrel, children." The elder Miss Smith's voice rose in earnest protest. "I'm anxious to see Mr. Sanders's beautiful books."

"Yes. Yes, indeed," said their host rather fussily. The scene was not opening according to his anticipations. "Won't all of you have a cup of tea before I play the showman? Afterwards you can decide which of you first made my disreputable acquaintance. I'm sure Henry will have tea for us directly."

Miss Paula tossed her little head. "You needn't vilify yourself, Mr. Sanders. It isn't polite to us. I should like some tea more than anything."

At this point Henry entered, followed by another man-servant, both laden and both very solemn. The service was most correct, but to deal with it exceeded Mr. Sanders's powers.

"Won't you—?" he said helplessly, turning to Miss Smith. "I'm afraid I don't know what to do. You used to give me tea in Cumberland, you remember."

Miss Smith seated herself beside the low table on which Henry had arranged his perfectly appointed tea-things. "Surely," she said. "But you can't plead ignorance of the way to pour a cup of tea when you have everything so exquisitely ready. I suspect that you always have it, don't you? It's a lovely service."

"I'm glad." Mr. Sanders smiled. "Only I can't imagine where Henry found it, for I didn't know it was

in the house. This is the first time, if you'll believe me, that I've had the honor of receiving my friends like this."

"I think you ought to do it often." Miss Paula sank deep into her chair. "It's the sweetest room to have tea in that I ever saw."

"We'll come any day, thank you." In spite of rebuffs, Gresham Clapp had not lost his good-humored assertiveness. "I'm not strong for tea, but I like the company."

"As often as you like," Peter Sanders responded amiably, well pleased to have his little party going so well. "Now I've discovered that I'm prepared to do it, I shall be anxious to have tea every day. Only I shall need help. By the way, Henry"—he turned to the servant, who hovered near to assist Miss Smith—"where did this tea-service come from?"

Henry's lean figure quivered with horror at the question. He grew purplish red in the face, and raised one hand as if to fend off a blow. Clearly he found it impossible to speak.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Sanders in alarm. "I can't believe I got the things by any very dreadful means; and if I did, my friends may as well know the worst. They'll suspect us of unspeakable crimes if we don't confess our petty misdemeanors."

"Oh, sir, it's only—" Henry began to speak bravely, but broke down.

"Don't let Mr. Sanders kid you, Henry," advised Gresham Clapp, taking more than the privilege of previous acquaintance. "Why should you mind if he doesn't? Anyhow, we're old friends, you know."

"Oh, sir, it's only—" Henry repeated his formula and again stumbled. "I'm altogether to blame," he went on desperately. "I had the things sent on ap-

proval, you see, sir, thinking you might not need them regularly. And indeed, the shop won't mind, I'm sure."

Peter Sanders frowned. "What, in the name of common sense, possessed you to do that?" He was justly annoyed, as much with himself for having forced the avowal as with Henry for having been so unscrupulous. Also, it is to be feared, there was a touch of ignoble pride in his displeasure. He liked to believe his house irreproachably conventional.

Miss Smith looked very uncomfortable, and for a moment her niece and Gresham Clapp seemed to be equally ill at ease. Then, suddenly, one of the young people caught the other's eye, and they went off into a gale of laughter.

"Please excuse me, Mr. Sanders," said Miss Paula after the outburst, which hadn't mended matters for the host. "And Gresham ought to beg your pardon, too. It's as much his fault as mine. We're like that when something seems to us funny, you know—we always have been. It might have been tragic if you didn't have everything in the world, but it's just funny as things are. Now, isn't it?"

"It's true that they are foolish children," commented Miss Smith severely. "They always have been. But I did think they had better manners."

"I suppose it *is* funny," said Peter Sanders, beginning to envisage the situation from a new angle. "Only don't do it again, Henry. I prefer to buy my household ware outright, but I like the tea-service. We'll keep it. I'll ring if we need anything more."

"You mustn't scold him," Miss Paula commanded, when the man had withdrawn. "In a way it was your own fault, for being inquisitive. One ought to take what the demigods like Henry provide, and say nothing."

"You haven't taken what the full-sized gods have provided," remarked Gresham audaciously. "You haven't taken me, though you've often said a good deal. I should like another cup, Miss Smith."

Miss Paula flushed. "My reasons get better and better," she murmured.

The inspection of the library, which followed tea, proved somewhat disappointing to Mr. Sanders, though it seemed to give the ladies vast satisfaction. Mr. Clapp made no pretence of showing an intelligent interest in the books, and left all the comments to the Misses Smith, who were appreciative rather than erudite.

"You make me ashamed of myself, Mr. Sanders," was Gresham's downright declaration when they were seated again. "Every time I talk with you, I get more so."

"That's good." The younger Miss Smith nodded her head wisely. "You ought to be."

"No more than you, Paula. I'm not a college graduate, and you are."

"You needn't boast of failing to do something that any fool can do."

Gresham Clapp colored. "I know it," he said in a different tone. "I flatter myself that even I had brains enough to get through college, if I had paid a little attention to the business."

"How does it happen," asked Mr. Sanders, thinking to lighten the conversation, "that you two have never happened to confess to each other your disreputable acquaintance with me? You seem to know one another's failings fairly well, if I judge correctly from your comments."

The elder Miss Smith sighed. "If you will tell me, Mr. Sanders, why they're such fools as they are, I'll be very grateful."

"You've said that before, Aunt Paula," said her niece. "As a matter of fact, I'm not a fool. When one friend of mine does something mean to another, am I not to resent it?"

"Do I then understand," asked Mr. Sanders, "that you are angry with this young man for something he has done to me? Or is it that I've done something to him? Let's be clear about this."

"I'd be very glad to be," muttered Gresham Clapp. "She has never let me explain."

"You never would." Miss Paula rose from her chair with indignation and faced the young man. "First you told me that we couldn't be married till you'd earned enough money to pay off a debt of honor. Then you explained that you'd cheated a man most disgustingly. I made out, right away, that you meant Mr. Sanders, and I hated you for it, especially as I knew how nice he was."

"You never let me explain," reiterated Gresham hotly. He had risen and stood confronting the girl. "You never told me you knew Mr. Sanders. Why should I bring his name into it? I'd have told you like a shot, all the same, if you'd confessed what you did to him once. You're perfectly unreasonable, Paula."

"Really!" exclaimed the elder Miss Smith. "I don't see why you two should put Mr. Sanders and me through a scene like this. It isn't decent."

To the mind of Peter Sanders had been coming the conviction that his young friends, in spite of their quarrels, were really devoted to one another. He was unaccustomed to the vagaries of lovers, and he supposed that they usually settled their differences in private. Books gave one no hint of passages like the one he was witnessing; yet he was convinced that he was in the presence of the divine flame, though it was

blown about by gusty winds. He had been standing beside the elder Miss Smith's chair, but now stepped forward to his other guests. It was a time, he felt intuitively, for some one to act.

"Please listen to me," he said commandingly. "I'm as ignorant as a man can well be of all the rules of the game. I've no reason to suppose that you won't resent my interference, both of you. At the same time, I can't help feeling that you'd be much happier if you'd be charitable to one another, and wait till you're married before you quarrel any more."

"We're not even engaged," explained Miss Paula demurely.

"Then you'd better arrange it at once," Mr. Sanders declared with assurance. "I shouldn't suppose it need take you long."

"It needn't," young Gresham asserted, taking a step towards the girl.

Miss Paula held up a hand to arrest him. "I dare say it would be foolish of me to object to Gresham's conduct, if you don't, Mr. Sanders. I'd no notion till this afternoon that you'd forgiven him, you see. And now I'm not sure—" She hung her head in confusion.

"I am." Without a moment's hesitation, and quite undisturbed by the presence of the others, Gresham Clapp took Paula in his arms and kissed her. "You're quite right, Mr. Sanders," he said laughingly over his shoulder, "it doesn't take long."

"I think, Miss Smith," remarked Mr. Sanders to the aunt, "that we are not needed here. May I show you a little collection of Pickerings that I keep in the next room?"

When they returned, after a quarter-hour devoted less to books than to mutual congratulations, they

found the lovers quite prepared to acknowledge that their engagement was an accomplished fact.

"There's not much sense in our waiting till Gresham has seen father," Miss Paula remarked to her aunt. "They've talked it all over, once before."

"We can at least get out of Mr. Sanders's way," returned Miss Smith. "He'll never invite any one to tea again after this experience."

"On the contrary," said Peter Sanders gallantly, "I wish you'd come to-morrow."

"Thank you very much." Gresham Clapp laughed. "Paula and I will be delighted. A large house like this will be very useful."

"We'll see." Miss Smith temporized. "In any case, you may dine with us, Gresham. Won't you come, too, Mr. Sanders? The little party won't be complete without you, of course."

"I?" Peter Sanders smiled ruefully and shook his head. "My dear lady, I couldn't. I have a previous—a previous reputation, let us say. It wouldn't do. There's no reason, however, why you shouldn't come here. I'm sure that will be safe. As for tea, you must really come often, if only as a matter of economy. Henry's silver must be used."

As things arranged themselves, he saw a good deal of his friends during the next days; and, one night, there was a happy little dinner in honor of the engaged couple, on which Henry spent a quite unnecessary amount of energy. A far less elaborate meal would have served every purpose except that of salving the servant's injured feelings. In the prevailing activity of the household the incident of the tea-service was forgiven, but he had to be shown that he was still trusted.

Meanwhile, before the Smiths left for home and

while Gresham Clapp still hovered about, to the neglect of his business interests, Walter Suydam dropped in to say that he had sent for Lamberton and had told him of Mr. Sanders's willingness to back his enterprise. Lamberton, it was reported, became ecstatic with happiness, not simply because his folding perambulator was to be put on the market, but because he was to be assisted by a famous man like Peter Sanders. Mr. Suydam did not wholly conceal his surprise at Lamberton's point of view, and he appeared relieved that Mr. Sanders took it humorously. "At any rate, you'll have the most devoted follower imaginable," was Mr. Suydam's conclusion.

One evening, not long after this, the hero-worshipping superintendent came down from the Heights and laid his plan before Mr. Sanders. He brought with him a full-sized model of the baby-carriage on which he was willing to stake his own future, and the capital of any one whom he could interest in its manufacture.

"Say," he remarked, "you could have knocked me down with a feather-duster when Mr. Suydam told me who it was he'd found to take up this." He indicated with a protective gesture the still folded vehicle. "I says to him: 'Holy smoke! Not Mr. Peter Sanders?' 'That's him,' says he. So I've brought along the machine. It's the greatest little contraption for the comfort of mothers that ever was. I hope you'll like it, Mr. Sanders."

There was a wistful note in the man's concluding sentence that would have softened Peter Sanders towards a much less practical invention than the little contrivance, which was thereupon exhibited in all its excellencies. If not destined to drive all other perambulators from the market, as Mr. Lamberton fondly

hoped, it looked like a good thing. There ought to be a sale for it.

"I see no reason why we can't make it go," said Mr. Sanders gravely, after a thorough examination of the vehicle and a study of the cost of manufacturing it. "And I shall be better off for a steady occupation. We'll get the Lamberton Company incorporated at once, and start in to learn the business."

"Not the Lamberton Company," protested the inventor. "You've got all the money, and there's your name, besides. We'd better call our concern the Sanders Company, or Sanders & Lamberton."

"Yes, there's my name!" Mr. Sanders echoed the words bitterly. "The more completely we keep my name out of it, the better chance we have to succeed. I am not widely known for conservatism in business, so I'll remain modestly in the background as secretary and treasurer of the company. I'll put in all the money necessary, and as much time as the business demands. Does that satisfy you?"

"It don't seem right." Mr. Lamberton frowned. Then his face lighted up. "Say, Mr. Sanders, I saw a daisy little plant, the other day, that would just about fill our bill, I guess."

"That's good. Where is it?"

"It's in Hoboken—cheap, and easy to get to, too."

"Very well," said Peter Sanders. "Hoboken let it be. I may as well finish my working days there as anywhere else. The labor I perform in Hoboken will at least be useful. I take your word for it, Mr. Lamberton, that you and I will be giving comfort to the infants of America as well as to their parents. I sincerely hope, for your sake, that the parents will appreciate our efforts, and that the next generation of

Americans may all be wheeled in the Lamberton machine."

"We'll get 'em, Mr. Sanders!" Lamberton exclaimed with glowing eyes. "You're in on a good thing, and we're the team to push it."

"I have great faith in the firm," replied Peter Sanders solemnly, "and a baby-carriage ought of course to be pushed. Suppose we draw up a tentative plan of campaign."

It was only when he broke the news to Henry, before he went to bed, that he felt the temerity of his undertaking. Henry's troubled gaze brought home to him the possible folly of embarking on a new venture like this at sixty.

"I hope, sir," said Henry, after a pause, "that you won't overtax your strength with business. That's what concerns me, Mr. Sanders, though it would be quite dreadful for you to lose your property. It isn't as if you were as young as Mr. Clapp, sir."

Mr. Sanders threw his cigar into the fire and rose. He was vaguely troubled by the man's gloomy forecast of possibilities, but he was glad to be facing a definite task. The manufacture and sale of perambulators might be risky, it might lack dignity, but it was honest and decent work.

"Don't croak, Henry," he said. "I may lose a little money, but I can't possibly squander enough to do you and me any harm. Of course I may die outright of Hoboken, but I'm glad enough to have the chance. There's the possibility that I may find out what I was meant for. It would be extraordinary luck if I should die an obscure and respected manufacturer of baby-carriages. Wouldn't it, now?"

CHAPTER XIV

REHABILITATION

IN WHICH PETER SANDERS FINDS HIS PLACE IN THE WORLD

TIME may have little absolute importance, as certain philosophers have maintained, but it will bear watching—it is apt to play oddish tricks on unsuspecting humanity. Viewed from the outside, six months may seem an insignificant segment of a lifetime, but to a man himself even so brief a period sometimes appears to stretch indefinitely into the past. Especially if he has crowded into the months a variety of new experiences, he may look back in wonder along the receding procession of days, and scarcely be able to believe that the Smith or Jones of last year wasn't an altogether different person from the Smith or Jones of to-day. Perhaps, indeed, Smith or Jones has so changed his point of view that he is, to all intents and purposes, only his own first cousin. Leaving the next world out of account, metempsychosis is quite possible in this.

Peter Sanders, after six months of active business, was by no means the same creature he had been when he entered into partnership with Lamberton. At least, though he looked and spoke like his old self, he had a different feeling about life and his place in it. He was younger, for one thing, and had no intention of retiring from active work. He had even grown a little ambitious, and was almost as anxious as its inventor to have the Lamberton Folding Perambulator known in every market. Morning by morning, he crossed the ferry to the little office that squatted beside his factory,

with the determination to find some new way of reducing costs or increasing profits. He had no leisure for introspection and vain imaginings, no inducement to cynicism. He was quite content to give his days to the creation and sale of well-varnished baby-wagons, and his evenings to books. After the melancholy ugliness of Hoboken, he found the stately comfort of his library most soothing. The conversational style of Montaigne was, moreover, in welcome contrast to that of Lamberton.

He had been a little surprised, at first, to find that most of his friends, old and new, thought his venture somewhat eccentric; and he had long since ceased to regard their opinions in the matter. They came to see him, after all, quite as often as before. Solid and respectable citizens sometimes met very odd fish at the Sanders house, or at least men with whom they would have disliked to associate anywhere else. The members of Mr. Sanders's circle, however, had learned to trust his taste in friends as in books, and paid him the tribute of getting on well with one another. He went out rarely of an evening, but on a few occasions during the winter had been persuaded to dine very informally with such people as the Cleves and the Suydams; and he had given two or three tactfully arranged dinners, himself. Mrs. Suydam, after attending the first, had insisted that she be always invited—which delighted Mr. Sanders almost as much as it did Henry. His men friends of diverse reputation not infrequently came to dine, but they did not count in the same way, for there had always been gentlemen in the house.

Notwithstanding the mild scorn of his acquaintances, he found his business genuinely absorbing. After all, there was an element of chance in it, and Peter Sanders had not changed his whole constitution in

altering his point of view. He was still attracted by the tang of uncontrollable circumstance. Moreover, he found that his dearly bought experience in judging the intentions of men helped him now. Wits had to be pitted against wits in the manufacture and sale of baby-carriages quite as much as in poker. One had occasion to bluff and to be ready to call another's bluff, which took one back a great many years indeed. It was all very good fun, in spite of a certain amount of sordid and monotonous drudgery, and it was turning out rather well. The business showed signs of becoming something more than a matter of plans and paper: it was going to be a prosperous reality.

One evening in June, James Garmany was dining with Mr. Sanders. He had just arranged for the sale of a block of perfectly good dwelling-houses of the nobler sort, which were to be wrecked to make way for a mammoth hotel, and he was correspondingly elated. Over the fish he began to tell about it, and by the time cigars were lighted he had related the whole magnificent story.

"I'm well pleased, if you ask me," he concluded. "It's the biggest thing I've pulled off, and it puts me where I want to be. Nobody can now say that I'm only a down-and-out politician who sells building-lots for a livin'. When our crowd comes to its own again, I'll have the stuff to be a senator if I choose it. Not that I'd trouble to throw my hat in the ring. I'm satisfied." A wreath of cigar smoke floated like a pennant of victory about his massive head.

"That's good." Mr. Sanders puffed his own cigar delicately. "You've carried your deal through in good form. Congratulations!"

"What I can't see," went on Mr. Garmany, "is why you don't strike into some business that will give

you elbow-room, yourself, Sanders. I'll not say it isn't better for your health to run your machine-shop in Jersey than to idle here, but I'd suppose you'd find the confinement tiresome. In the old days you never stopped at penny-ante, if I remember."

"I'm satisfied."

"Which is just the point I'm drivin' at. Why should you be? You've the capital, and you've the fine friends nowadays. You could be king-pin still, if you wouldn't waste your days in tryin' to make a baby-carriage that will fold into a handkerchief. It's not your size at all."

"Don't worry about me, Jim." Peter Sanders laughed. "I'm willing to let you do the big things. All I care about is something to occupy my mind. The size doesn't matter. I don't have to ride in my perambulators, you know."

Mr. Garmany frowned. "But you'll be doin' that yet, Pete, if you ain't careful. You'll fall into decay, as I've told you before this, and have to be wheeled about in a large copy of your mother's delight. You'd be a proud figure, wouldn't you now, goin' up and down in one of them?"

"I'd be sure, anyhow, that it was built to stand the strain. That's something, Jim. Lamberton and I aren't working any flim-flam game. Our business will never be spectacular, but it's going to be honest."

"There you are!" sighed Garmany. "Honesty's not excitin' enough to keep a man in health. As if one had to stick himself into a hole, and bury himself there, in order to be decent! With your chances——"

"Well, what are my chances?" asked Mr. Sanders, a little sharply. "I'd ruin any business that brought my name into prominence. A Tammany politician—if you must have the truth—isn't so widely known as

I am. People are always willing to believe, besides, that he's a pattern of all the virtues in everything except politics. It's different with me. I should find it hard to persuade the public that I'm not rotten in everything."

"Look at myself," said Mr. Garmany scornfully. "You, with pillars of church and state knockin' at your doors and eatin' off your mahogany! Nobody cares, now you've quit the game. They delight in your personality, and they find both your books and your wine respectable. Does the world ask more of a man? The books, no doubt, are a help." He swept the room, with one of his customary magnificent gestures.

"Oh, I've a few friends who are willing to take me for what I am. I don't deny that, and I'm grateful. But I know, Jim, and you know, that by people in general I shall be considered a sort of monster till the end of the chapter. That's why I intend to keep quiet and give nobody an excuse for talking about me."

Peter Sanders spoke calmly and with all sincerity. He was happy in the gathering twilight of his reputation, and he had no wish to have the fierce glare of its full day return. With great tranquillity of spirit, he could resign himself to the anonymous production of vehicles for the very young, and to a quiet life at home.

"You'll tire of it," Mr. Garmany warned him. "The excitements of Hoboken will not last always. You'll begin to remember how once you kinged it, and you'll not be content."

"I'll take the risk." Mr. Sanders squinted at his cigar, which he held lengthwise before his face. "There's no danger, I think, in the time I shall last. I'm beaten, if you like, but I'm satisfied, as I've just told you."

That his friend's warning made a certain impression on him, however, is evidenced by a conversation that

he had with Henry while dressing, the following evening.

"Mr. Garmany dislikes my business, Henry. You still agree with him, don't you?"

"Oh, sir, I dare say the business is well enough. Not that it's quite the thing, perhaps. You should warn your shirtmaker, Mr. Sanders, that he's growing careless of the quality of his linen. This new set is not quite up to the mark."

"Isn't it? Very well, I'll go for him. But if what I'm doing satisfies me, I don't see why anybody should mind. It amuses me sufficiently."

"I'm glad of that, though I don't like to have you making the hard journey every day. If only you had offices on this side the river——"

"It would be more dignified? Perhaps so, but it wouldn't be on the spot. I shouldn't see how things are going. You won't understand about it, Henry, yet the fact is that I like to see the workmen actually making the Lamberton Perambulator. I've been doing something very different all my life, you must remember. It's only now that I've found anything useful to do."

Henry laid a tie on the dressing-table at the most convenient angle possible, and pondered. To assist his thought, he clasped his hard-bitten face. "It's—it's beneath you, Mr. Sanders," he said after a moment. "There's no question that it is, sir, which all your friends think, I've no doubt. Still, I'm very glad if you are happy in it, Mr. Sanders."

"Happy?" Peter Sanders turned towards him with a smile of which he himself scarcely knew the underlying cause. "I haven't the least idea whether I'm happy or not; I haven't thought about it. Probably I am, but I got over the habit of asking myself ques-

tions like that, some time ago. All I know is that I'm doing a decent man's job. My reputation is as bad as ever, but my place in the world is different. In my own eyes, at least, I'm rehabilitated."

It was only a little later than this, before the summer was far advanced, that he received an invitation from the Gresham Clapps to pay them a few days' visit. They had been married as soon after Easter as convention permitted, and were now settled for the summer in a place on Long Island. They described themselves, rather unplausibly, as staid married folk very greatly in need of distraction. Would he come, bringing, of course, the delightful Henry? The latter would be a real help to them by way of impressing on their newly constituted household a lofty ideal of domestic service.

Mr. Sanders was contemplating no extended holiday during the summer: he was now a man of affairs, engaged in nursing a tender manufacturing plant into vigorous life, and he was fully persuaded that he couldn't safely leave. Something might go wrong. Lamberton was endlessly ingenious, but he had an odd capacity for making mistakes that no one else could possibly make. Mr. Sanders was, moreover, so busy that he did not suffer greatly from the heat that was already beginning to bake the pavements of the metropolis. In default of a real vacation, however, a few days by the shore attracted him. Besides, he was frankly curious to know what marriage had done for his young friends, the Clapps. Henry, it developed, would be very glad to go along as valet, an office that he had never resigned, even though he was also butler. Indeed, Henry was quite firm about their going; he insisted that the invitation be accepted at once.

It was a hot day when they went down—a breath-

less morning with the thermometer standing at ninety, and stagnant air that parched one's skin like a touch of fever. The train was, if possible, more sun-baked than the streets of Manhattan. In the parlor-car electric fans spun vainly, rather increasing the discomfort of the travellers than otherwise by their simulation of a breeze. Mechanical siroccos, they thwarted the cooling processes of nature, drying up the very fount of perspiration.

"It's really very hot," remarked Mr. Sanders to Henry, as they whirled past the final stretches of brick and mortar and began to have glimpses of open country. He had insisted that Henry get a chair beside his own, on the plea that he might need attention on the journey, but now he a little regretted it, imagining that an ordinary coach with open windows would have been less intolerable. "It's as hot as Tophet in here."

"Yes, sir, but not worse than for the past three days," Henry answered, wiping his face apologetically.

"It seems far hotter to me. Still, one minds things more when out for pleasure. I've shaken the responsibilities of business from my shoulders, and so I can make myself as miserable as I please with the heat. No doubt you're right as far as records go, but you can't take from me my impression that the temperature is the highest of the summer."

A man across the aisle, who had been hidden by a newspaper ever since they entered the car, partially lowered his screen at this point and muttered under his breath: "If you ask me, it's as hot as hell." The newspaper dropped to his knees. "I beg your pardon." It was Mr. Sanders's old enemy, the district attorney.

Before he could raise his paper again, which he started instinctively to do, Mr. Sanders's voice arrested him. "Don't apologize, sir. I'm quite accustomed to bad

language, I assure you, and I think you are justified in your comparison."

There was a vacant chair next the district attorney's. Without giving him a chance to make any move, Mr. Sanders sprang up—despite his slow-moving joints—and took it. A sudden but vigorous impulse made him anxious to talk to the man for once. He wasn't quite sure what he had to say, and he was bent on mischief rather than on profitable discussion. He felt that he could bother his late tormentor exceedingly by forcing a conversation upon him in this public way, which was sufficient reason for the attempt. Mr. Sanders cannot be defended, but he was acting quite without his usual deliberation. He was tempted by a whim, and to it he yielded. His intelligence had no part in it. The swiftness with which he habitually acted made him cross the car before he had even decided to do so.

The district attorney seemed inclined to resent the change of position and, even more, the talk it portended. Without answering Mr. Sanders's remark, he raised his newspaper again and attempted to swing his chair to an angle of protection. He had reckoned without his own suitcase, which the porter had wedged against the wall in a way that permitted him no movement except towards the man he was trying to avoid.

"Let my man get that out of your way, sir," said Mr. Sanders helpfully. "I have long been wishing that so favorable an opportunity as this might present itself, when I could thank you personally for your forbearance to me."

Taken off his guard perhaps, and in any case quite unable to move, the district attorney threw his paper to one side and glowered. "You needn't thank me," he declared in a low tone that was almost a snarl. "I'd have you in Sing Sing now if I could."

Peter Sanders looked at him fixedly from beneath his drooping eyelids. "Would you mind telling me why?" he asked gently. "As a reformed outlaw and a manufacturer of baby-carriages, I am greatly interested in the opinions of the governing classes. Why do you still feel rancor against so harmless a person as I have—let us say—become?"

"Baby-carriages?" The district attorney began to look puzzled and interested, as well as annoyed. "Look here, Sanders, we let you come back on the understanding that you would keep quiet. If you break your parole—it's virtually that—and go to playing any of your old tricks, we'll jail you in a minute. You haven't influence enough to stop us, I warn you. I don't know what you mean by baby-carriages, but I know what we'll do to you."

"That was one matter about which I wished to speak with you." Mr. Sanders paused, and drew from his pocket an attractively printed folder. "I don't intend, as a rule, to meddle with the sales of the company with which I am connected; but I should like to make an exception in your case. I feel sure that you must know something about baby-carriages. I noted, only the other day, that you were being congratulated on the birth of a third daughter. I should feel honored if she would accept from me, as a token of my esteem for her father, one of the Lamberton Perambulators." He proffered the folder.

The lawyer's powerful jaw relaxed. Peter Sanders watched him narrowly. He was enjoying himself even more than he could have hoped, but he could by no means tell what his victim was likely to say or do. Across the aisle, Henry was trying to look unconcerned, but was clearly picking up what he could of the conversation.

After a moment's hesitation, the district attorney took the folder and began silently to study it.

"You will find," Mr. Sanders went on evenly, "that the thing is really an admirable contrivance. I can speak of it without reserve, since I had nothing to do with its invention. I am merely trying to see that it is manufactured without waste, and that it is properly marketed. In September we shall open a conveniently located show-room, where the device will be displayed to better advantage than it can be by pictures and description. But I wish you might realize its merits earlier than that."

"Do you mean you're running this show?" The representative of the law frowned menacingly at the advertising sheet.

"I should prefer to put it that I'm interested in it and have an active share in its management. To speak accurately, I am at present secretary and treasurer of the Lamberton Company, though I don't advertise the connection. You—and others—have made my name so celebrated that it would be scarcely becoming for me to appear before the public in so innocent a venture. The public might misunderstand."

"Thanks very much." The district attorney pocketed the folder and reached for his newspaper. "If you're in this thing," he said grimly, "it will bear inspection."

"Excuse me." Mr. Sanders's voice was compelling. "May I, then, have the pleasure of sending you a specimen of our wares?"

The newspaper was dropped again, and the lawyer gazed at his antagonist fixedly. His piercing black eyes had served him well many times for intimidation, as well as for reading guilty secrets. Imperturbable, and indeed greatly amused, Mr. Sanders lifted his

own drooping lids and returned the look straightforwardly.

"Do you still find it impossible to believe me an honest man?" he asked. "I assure you that our product, though collapsible, will never injure the tenderest infant. It is harmless even in the hands of a nurse-maid."

After his prolonged scrutiny, the district attorney's eyes began suddenly to twinkle, and a hard smile played about his mouth. "I thought I knew all about you, Mr. Sanders," he said in a changed tone, "but I had never heard that you were a joker."

"Again you mistake me." Mr. Sanders shook his head very solemnly. He felt sure that he had won his man, though he had not foreseen that possibility when he began. He was determined not to make his victory too cheap. "I have never felt less inclined to jest," he added.

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded the district attorney, "that you are actually making real baby-carriages?" He tapped the pocket where he had placed the folder.

"Of course I am. Didn't I give you my word, implicitly at least, that I would live quietly? Could anything be quieter and less dangerous to the public welfare than such a business? Besides, I find it most engrossing. The excitements of it surpass those of my former calling."

"I'm glad you feel that way about it. I don't mind saying that my mind would be easier, if I didn't have to worry about fellows like you."

Mr. Sanders was struck, as he had been during his one previous interview, with a dreadful lack of address and suavity in the district attorney. His manners were unintelligently bad, for which there was no excuse

at all. However, the beast could be tamed, apparently, if one applied oneself to the task. One could deal with him by means of derisive humor, it seemed.

"Please don't charge your mind any longer with my possible misconduct," he said, following the lead that he had got. "My inoffensive business is conducted in Hoboken, so it needn't bother you. That is, I take it that your duty doesn't extend to the regulation of baby-carriages in Jersey. If it does, I shall be very glad to have our product inspected from your office."

The lawyer's grin broadened. "I don't think that will be necessary," he replied. "I believe you're telling me the truth, this time."

"I am quite capable of it." Mr. Sanders restrained his anger with difficulty. The district attorney's manners were certainly execrable. "Indeed, whatever my misdeeds, I have always prided myself on not being so much of a liar as—well—some of my detractors. That is a minor consideration, however. What interests me at the moment is your answer to my request. Are you going to allow me to give you a perambulator as a sign of my regeneration? I very much hope so."

The district attorney became grave. "No, I'm not," he said decisively. "A man with my job can't afford to take presents from anybody. You can see that, if you're as honest as you seem to have become. But I'll buy one."

"You're probably right." Peter Sanders's voice struck a new note. "I venture to imitate your frankness, and say that I never supposed I could feel so much respect for you as I do just now. It hadn't occurred to me that I was making an improper offer; I was intent on showing you my good faith. You're right, however. Please accept my apologies."

"That's all right. I'm glad you can see my point."

The lawyer preened himself self-consciously. "Nobody has ever dared to suggest graft to me, I can tell you. My record is too clean."

Mr. Sanders lifted his eyes, surveying his companion mildly. "If the thing were possible," he remarked, "I should be willing to agree with your analysis. I suppose, however, that it is essential to the proper conduct of your office. I'm very grateful to have had this talk, but I mustn't keep you longer from your newspaper."

"Oh, I'd finished." The district attorney looked out at the dunes and the stretches of blue water that had come into view. "As a matter of fact, I get off at the next station. I'm glad you spoke to me. I think we understand each other, don't we? Nobody will touch you as long as you keep on making baby-carriages."

The interview seemed to be at an end. A shiny-faced porter restlessly fingered a whisk-broom near by, waiting for his prey. Mr. Sanders rose. He did not offer to shake hands. Before this compound of unmalleable righteousness and bad manners, he was very cold. He could respect it, but he did not care to pursue its acquaintance.

"I'm relieved that the occupation is judged innocent," was all he permitted himself to say.

The district attorney rose in turn. "I think you're doing a bully thing," he said generously. "Don't make any mistake about that. And look here, you're probably a little sore that I wouldn't have anything to do with you that time I came to your place in New Hampshire—when was it? I remember hammering you, but I couldn't do any less."

A little startled by this revival of an unhappy encounter, Mr. Sanders shook his head. It appeared that

an apology was intended, though an apology oddly framed. "I was annoyed at the time, I remember," he admitted, "but I bear you no malice."

"That's right. A man in my place can't be too careful about keeping clear of lawbreakers, you know." Still talking, the lawyer submitted himself to the porter. "Now that we've come to an understanding, I shall be glad to have you drop into my office some time. Good-bye."

He held out his hand. Not without a touch of scorn for himself that he did not refuse to make peace on such terms, Mr. Sanders took the hand. After all, he reflected, he had made the overtures, and he couldn't well object to their surprising outcome. At the same time, he felt beaten as he took his place next to Henry and watched the district attorney bolt from the car. He had been amused, but he could scarcely repress a shudder of disgust. He liked the man as little as ever, though he understood much better the reasons for his success.

Henry looked up inquiringly as his master sat down, but said nothing.

"Precisely," Mr. Sanders remarked after a moment. "I am now reconciled with the authorities of law and order, and a little out of patience with the reconciliation. Let me warn you, however, against supposing that honesty and uprightness are always such objectionable virtues. I've seen a few decent men, Henry, whose manners were above reproach."

Before he dropped his eyes to the book he was reading, Henry permitted himself a faint smile.

The remainder of the journey passed without incident. In fact, Mr. Sanders dozed most uncomfortably in his chair, and was very glad to be roused when they reached the little station where they were to be met. As he

stepped from the train into the fresh breeze that was rippling the surface of the lagoon within the barrier reef, he felt invigorated at once and was glad he had come. Moreover, he received such a whole-hearted welcome from the Clapps that he forgot both the hot journey and the condescension of the district attorney.

Young Gresham and his bride were on the platform, looking to the eyes of their old friend like the merest children, but evidently considering themselves serious and settled persons. They swept their guest into an enormous motor-car, which the owner drove with deft precision, and were still welcoming him when they reached the door of their house. Mr. Sanders had the amused sense, from the first instant of arrival, that he was absolutely in their hands. Evidently they realized their competence, and had not yet got past the stage of liking to play their parts as householders for the pure fun of it.

They had taken a house with a lovely view of the sprawling coast-line—a house that had possibilities of being lovely in itself, half a century later, if it survived so long. At the moment, its white stucco was unpleasantly smart, and its gardens too obviously planted at great expense with the notion of giving an effect of age. It needs no description: it was merely one of the ten thousand minor constructions of Aladdin's lamp that have scattered themselves over the Eastern States during the last decades. Above everything else, it was comfortable—comfortable with well-considered extravagance. Every arrangement that could minister to relaxation was here, and everything keyed to the note of unpretentious good manners.

"It is now time to ask how you like our house," said Mrs. Clapp, while they sat at dinner in the outdoor

room that the architect had contrived from stucco and gray tile.

"I like it very much," Mr. Sanders answered, speaking most truthfully. As a matter of fact, he would have found any house delightful in the circumstances. To be received with so much consideration by two amusing young people whom he greatly liked, and to find that their whole purpose in life at the moment seemed to be his happiness, was a gratifying experience for a lonely old gentleman. That he happened to be Peter Sanders made the experience even more novel and delightful.

"We think of buying the house," said Gresham, laughing. "At least, Paula does. It's the first house of her own she's ever had, you see, and she rather cottons to the place. I think she exaggerates its good points. However, it wouldn't be bad to have something of the sort to run on to in the summer, I admit."

"You admit!" broke in his wife scornfully. "You know you want it as much as I do. Why don't you take a place down here, Mr. Sanders? That would be perfect."

Peter Sanders smiled at them both. "There are probably dozens of good reasons," he answered, "but I can think of two without looking for them. Your neighbors would object, and I'm too busy."

"I thought you had retired!" Mrs. Clapp's exclamation seemed to indicate a trace of dismay. She glanced at Gresham in perplexity.

"Please don't be troubled." Mr. Sanders spoke reassuringly. "My works are the works of innocence. It is natural that my friends should prefer to have me idle, I know, for it isn't desirable to have one's acquaintances concerned in—in my former occupation. But I am now a blameless manufacturer of baby-carriages."

"Oh, come, Mr. Sanders." Gresham Clapp laid

down the mushroom that was already impaled on his fork. He was as incredulous as the district attorney had been, earlier in the day. "What's the game?"

"The game," answered Peter Sanders gravely, "is the best one I've ever played. I make the Lamberton Folding Perambulator in Hoboken, New Jersey. It is the mother's delight, the father's release, the nursemaid's friend. The business is flourishing, which is one reason why I can't live in the country through the summer. As for the other, no explanation is necessary. I am an impossible acquaintance; never could I be listed among the respectable guests at a respectable party."

Little Mrs. Clapp's bright eyes took fire. "Why not?" she asked sharply. "Now that I'm married to Gresham, I intend to have my own way, and I should like to see any of my guests objecting to anybody I chose to invite. In Chicago, at least, they wouldn't dare. That was the reason why I married Gresham."

"Thanks," said the young husband, grinning.

"But Long Island isn't Chicago." Mr. Sanders was touched by her instant championship of his social existence, but also a good deal amused. "You know you once got into trouble on my account."

Mrs. Clapp blushed. "I gave you trouble. It wasn't because I was looking out for your interests," she retorted. "I was a little fool in those days."

"You were," said Gresham bitterly. "You weren't going to marry me."

His wife ignored him. "I've never understood before, Mr. Sanders," she went on, "why you wouldn't come to our wedding. I was very much hurt."

"I'm sorry. But you see now."

"I think it was a silly reason." Mrs. Clapp's tone was firm. "As if I would have asked anybody I was afraid of, and as if I could have been afraid of you!

Your present was wonderful—I must tell you that again. I think it's splendid of you to go back into business, if you like it; but that makes no difference at all with me."

"It does in some directions." Peter Sanders laughed. "I had a touching scene of reconciliation, this morning, with my old enemy, the district attorney. He formally—and impolitely—presented me with a passport of respectability—as a maker of perambulators."

"I like his nerve!" said Gresham shortly. "All the same, I dare say it will help you in your business. By the way, you'd better turn over your sales in the West to one of our men. We've got a great machine for selling things."

Mr. Sanders bowed. "I shall be only too happy to do so. I'm sure that our president, Mr. Lamberton, will be overjoyed. He's ambitious, and naturally enough, as the inventor, wishes to have our contrivance used in every household in the land. My own interest—well, it's a little hard to explain my own interest. It is genuine, but perhaps a little less personal than his."

"It ought not to make you neglect your friends or your health," Mrs. Clapp put in.

"Oh, no, it won't do that. Henry looks after my health, you see, so I've no concern with that; and I intend to cultivate my friends assiduously, as soon as we get the baby-carriages trundling in considerable numbers along the highways of the continent. But I'm satisfied with a comparatively small circle of friends, after all; I shan't wish to force myself on any one who insists on regarding me as the wreck of a notorious past. A few friends, a great many books, and a flourishing sale of perambulators will suffice me for my time."

"That doesn't sound so bad to me." Gresham Clapp looked at him earnestly. "I'm not sure, you know,

that your district attorney did you such a bad turn, after all."

Peter Sanders smiled. "Perhaps not. I'm willing to admit the possibility, but I can't allow him much credit for it. He had no intention of saving my soul, I'm sure, or of transforming me into a maker of vehicles for the very young. It has all been quite fortuitous."

"Uncle Joseph would attribute it to Providence," remarked Gresham, "which reminds me that he's very anxious to see you again. He talked a lot about you when he came on for the wedding."

"That's very kind of him." Mr. Sanders was indeed well pleased that the clergyman whom he had enticed into a clandestine friendship could still think of him with kindness. "I should like to see him again."

"You see!" said Mrs. Clapp triumphantly. "It's impossible to be more respectable than Doctor Henderson—one would suffocate; yet he regards you as an intimate friend. If you felt in need of rehabilitation, you couldn't do better than that."

"I don't know that Uncle Joseph has much on your aunt, Paula, when it comes to respectability." Gresham turned to his wife with a quizzical smile. "Just add her to the list of the people with whom Mr. Sanders gets by." He shifted his gaze back to the guest. "You know, don't you, that Miss Smith sets you on a pedestal? I told her, one day, that I thought it was forward of her unless you'd been proposing on the sly. You ought to have seen her blush."

That Peter Sanders himself blushed at this cannot be wondered at. His name had not been linked with any woman's through all the years of his notorious career; and he was unaccustomed to such jests. Quite rightly, he thought the young man's taste very questionable.

"Gresham!" cried Mrs. Clapp warningly.

"What's the harm? I can't see Mr. Sanders, or any one else, proposing to Aunt Paula. Can you? But she's a mighty good friend."

"She is, indeed," said Peter Sanders, recovering himself. "I'm fortunate in my friends. As a matter of fact, I've come to think that I'm fortunate in a good many ways—much beyond my deserts."

Mrs. Clapp smiled wisely. "You're not the only person present who is. Take Gresham, now——"

"Why not take yourself, dearest?" asked her husband. "It would be politer, and it would be just as good an illustration."

Whereupon all three laughed gayly, and talk drifted into other channels. It was not, indeed, until later in the evening that the full force of the conversation became clear to Mr. Sanders. He turned to Henry, who was arranging his room for the night.

"Henry, it is said that I can now go anywhere without polluting the garments of the passers-by. I am, it seems, rehabilitated. It must be a satisfaction to you, after all you've been through, to have a respectable employer once more."

"Yes, sir," Henry answered. Then he stopped for a moment beside his master's chair. "But it's only, Mr. Sanders, that people have come to recognize what I've always known. I think I'd better lay out the light-brown suit for to-morrow, sir."

"Very well, Henry." Peter Sanders sighed gently, and drew his eyelids together, while his mouth formed itself into a wry smile. "I was going to say that I was indifferent to the clothes, but I suppose I'm not. The habiliments—the clothes, I mean—are very important. After all, I'm rather pleased with my nice new suit."











